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HFG MALI FINAL REPORT



USAID's Health Finance and Governance (HFG) project helps to improve health in developing countries by expanding people's access to health care. Led by Abt Associates, the project team works with partner countries to increase their domestic resources for health, manage those precious resources more effectively, and make wise purchasing decisions.



ABOUT THE HEALTH FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE PROJECT 2012-2018

The Health Finance and Governance (HFG) Project works to address some of the greatest challenges facing health systems today. Drawing on the latest research, the project implements strategies to help countries increase their domestic resources for health, manage those precious resources more effectively, and make wise purchasing decisions. The project also assists countries in developing robust governance systems to ensure that financial investments for health achieve their intended results.

With activities in more than 40 countries, HFG collaborates with health stakeholders to protect families from catastrophic health care costs, expand access to priority services – such as maternal and child health care – and ensure equitable population coverage through:

- Improving financing by mobilizing domestic resources, reducing financial barriers, expanding health insurance, and implementing provider payment systems;
- Enhancing governance for better health system management and greater accountability and transparency;

- Improving management and operations systems to advance the delivery and effectiveness of health care, for example, through mobile money and public financial management; and
- Advancing techniques to measure progress in health systems performance, especially around universal health coverage.

The HFG project (2012-2018) is funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and is led by Abt Associates in collaboration with Avenir Health, Broad Branch Associates, Development Alternatives Inc., the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Results for Development Institute, RTI International, and Training Resources Group, Inc.

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To learn more, visit www.hfgproject.org



The Ministry of Health and Public Hygiene, Bamako, Mali



CHALLENGES

When HFG began working in Mali in 2015, the country had made notable progress in the previous ten years in reducing under-five and infant mortality by 30 percent and 24 percent, respectively (WHO 2018). The Ministry of Health and Public Hygiene (MHPH) was preparing to conduct in a 2016 evaluation of Mali's five-year health plan, the Program for Health and Social Development (PRODESS). Taking stock of the health system at this time was important because progress in improving the population's health in recent years had been hampered by various internal security issues and the subsequent creation of displaced populations and overburdened health structures. A lack of up-to-date information on health system performance and gaps impeded the government's ability to make strategic decisions and pursue efforts to strengthen health systems to meet the health needs of Malians.

Despite intense coordination briefly during the response to Ebola in 2014, the health sector experienced delays in decision making and coordination among stakeholders and key actors due to a lack of current information on the role and potential of the private sector. This situation weakened the government's ability to make informed decisions to strengthen the health system and provide high quality health services to the Malian population.

The MHPH requested HFG's assistance to generate information on the health system, with a focus on health financing and the private sector, through a collaborative process that would inform reforms going forward. HFG was called on to convene and consult technical and financing partners, the private sector for health, and government stakeholders at national and sub-national levels to contribute to generating and using information to make strategic decisions and strengthen the health system.



CHANGE

After three years of HFG's technical assistance, the MHPH has critical information on the strengths and challenges of each health building block; information on health spending and on the private sector to help prioritize health interventions; improved planning; and sound allocation of health investment. We collaborated with the MHPH and other partners to address the information gaps that have stood in the way of improving Mali's health system. Our activities have helped to inform more technical in-depth and evidence-based discussions around efforts to strengthen health system performance, resulting in changes that are paving the way for a positive impact on the health status of Malians.

Our support has improved implementation of Mali's guiding strategy for achieving universal health coverage and the PRODESS objectives. Our strategies and activities also helped build consensus among stakeholders at the national

and subnational levels, strengthened the use of data for decision-making, and increased engagement between the public and private sectors that will lead to future dialogue on Mali's path to Universal Health Coverage.

This report describes key health care finance and governance transformations that are strengthening Mali's health system. In key results over the past three years, HFG's support has:

- Strengthened the management capacity of the Secretary General's office within the MHPH
- Built consensus on health system priorities and challenges among national and subnational stakeholders
- Improved the MHPH's capacity to use health financing data for decision-making
- Increased engagement between the public and private health sectors

MAKING A DIFFERENCE



RESULT AREA I

Stronger management capacity of the MHPH Secretary General's office

HFG played an integral role in strengthening the MHPH's management capacity, particularly at the highest level. With our support, the ministry understands how it can function more effectively, organizes its work better among team members, makes timely policy decisions, and effectively manages health programs that make a difference in the lives of Malians.

HFG conducted a management assessment of the MHPH Secretary General's office to provide recommendations for improving its efficiency and effectiveness. The office oversees the planning, organization, coordination, and management of the MHPH, but lacked the staff to handle a significant workload. Findings from the assessment increased ministry leaders' awareness of the heavy burden of work on a small staff; insufficient coordination among technical advisors; a large backlog of work on critical health programs; and weak coordination among partners. These problems reduced the overall efficiency of the Secretary General's office in managing ministry initiatives and making timely policy decisions.

After we shared our findings and recommendations with key stakeholders, MHPH leadership decided to assign three technical advisors to the Secretary General's office. The decision demonstrated the office's confidence in the management assessment findings and strong engagement in applying the recommendations.

Having a larger team in the office has improved the MHPH's ability to make timely and strategic decisions on important health issues, and has helped remove bottlenecks in the delivery of vital health services.

The findings and recommendations from HFG's management assessment have also informed the National Health Strategy update. MHPH is continuing to consider our recommendations as it pursues important health system reforms, including reorganizing and reinforcing the capacity of central health directorates; improving coordination among donors and technical and development partners; and enhancing dialogue among various stakeholders such as communities and civil society organizations.

"The results of this study were used by the Ministry of Health to successfully increase the number of technical advisors by three additional staff - recently hired on state budget - to alleviate the workload and augment the efficiency of the General Secretariat functioning. This was a major achievement."

- Sidi Cisse, Senior Health Policy Advisor, USAID Mali





RESULT AREA 2. Consensus on health systems priorities and challenges

HFG played an integral role in helping national and subnational stakeholders reach consensus on priorities for strengthening Mali’s fragile health system. With clear priorities, stakeholders are implementing the most strategic health systems reforms to enhance health care services and improve the health status of Malians.

Assessing Mali’s health system to generate an evidence base of health system strengths and challenges

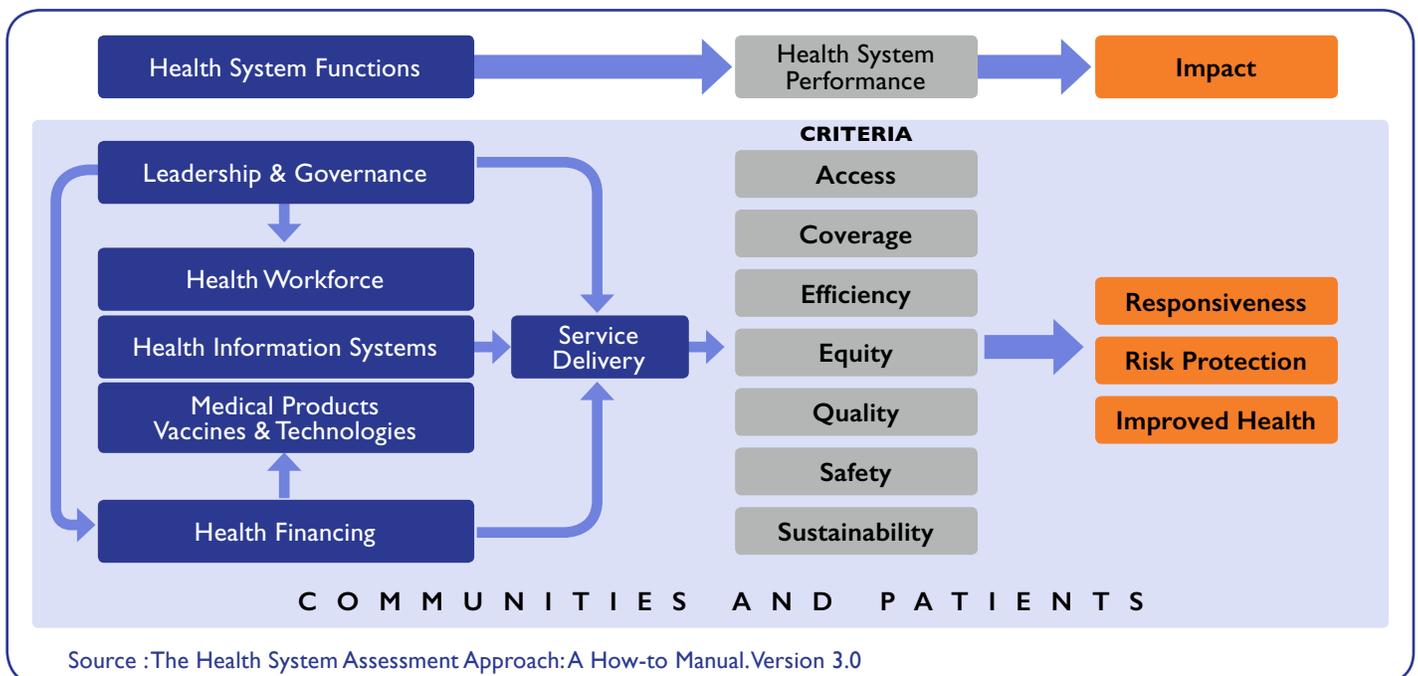
HFG conducted a comprehensive health systems assessment (HSA) to assess health system strengths, challenges, and opportunities. The HSA is organized around WHO’s six building blocks (technical areas) of the health system: leadership/ governance, financing, service delivery, human resources, medical products, vaccines and technologies, and health information systems.¹ The resulting HSA report identified major strengths, weaknesses and general recommendations for each building block in Mali.

We conducted the assessment using the Health Systems Assessment Approach, an internationally recognized tool that has been used to assess health systems in more than 30 countries. The approach incorporates a structured, indicator-based methodology that can be tailored to the country context. The approach synthesizes information—from document reviews, in-country stakeholder interviews, and site visits—to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and translates the findings into specific recommendations across the health system building blocks.

The table on page 4 summarizes the key challenges identified by the HSA. To build consensus around the findings and recommendations, we conducted open and inclusive workshops at the national and regional levels for administrative authorities, local community authorities, development partners, and public and private health sector practitioners.

¹ The Health System Assessment Approach: A How-to Manual. Version 3.0. <http://healthsystemassessment.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Section-1-Modules-1-1-1-2-HSAA-Manual-August-2012-21.pdf> [accessed 29 May 2018]

HEALTH SYSTEM BUILDING BLOCKS ADDRESSED BY HFG’S HEALTH SYSTEMS ASSESSMENT IN MALI



Our HSA report served as an important reference document at the January 2018 High Forum for Health, where the Prime Minister of Mali and more than 500 stakeholders met to discuss and define priorities for health system reforms. Stakeholders prioritized several key recommendations from the HSA to

strengthen Mali's health system, including our recommendations to monitor implementation of PRODESS; increase the use of health financing data for decision-making; and improve understanding of the private sector. These recommendations were reflected in the final report from the forum.

HEALTH SYSTEM ASSESSMENT FINDINGS: KEY CHALLENGES IN MALI

BUILDING BLOCKS OF HEALTH SYSTEMS	KEY HEALTH SYSTEMS CHALLENGES
GOVERNANCE & LEADERSHIP	<p>Weak involvement of national players, such as the private sector, nongovernmental organizations, and civil society, in health policymaking and strategic planning.</p> <p>Weak engagement of national authorities, community health managers, and leaders to enforce accountability for health financing, budget implementation, and execution of public health programs.</p>
FINANCING	<p>Weak coordination and inefficient use of external funding from partners and donors, leading to duplication of efforts or waste of scarce resources to address priority health problems.</p>
HEALTH INFORMATION SYSTEMS	<p>Lack of stakeholder coordination in providing key information and keeping information up-to-date.</p> <p>Statistics collected by the health information system lack data from the health private sector.</p>
HUMAN RESOURCES	<p>Insufficient use of the human resources data and evidence for making fair and timely decisions to appoint or reassign health workers of the Ministry of Health.</p> <p>Lack of controlled growth of private, for-profit schools in charge of training mid- and high-level cadres of health workers, affecting the quality of training and the skills and competence of trainees.</p>
MEDICAL PRODUCTS, VACCINES AND TECHNOLOGIES	<p>Lack of a joint strategy and platform composed of government, the private sector, civil society organizations, and pharmacists to address insufficient control of the quality of medicines and the expanding market for counterfeit medicines.</p>
SERVICE DELIVERY	<p>The current referral network has shifted health center focus away from public health interventions, toward curative care interventions.</p> <p>Urgent need to establish a systematic quality control system which can quickly accredit private and public health care providers and graduate them in a timely manner.</p>

Strengthening oversight of national health system reforms

The HFG project's HSA findings have helped Mali's Program for Health and Social Development (PRODESS) identify and address key implementation challenges. PRODESS is a five-year plan that guides Mali's strategy to achieve universal health coverage, including the use of health insurance and public-private partnerships. Effective implementation of PRODESS is critical to improving the health and well-being of Malians.

One weakness identified by our HSA report was a lack of strong oversight of PRODESS, which was urgently needed to make progress on achieving the plan's objectives. To address this weakness, we helped build the capacity of five preexisting (but inactive) technical working groups responsible for overseeing the PRODESS implementation. Taken together, the groups comprise 100 technical experts (35 percent female and 65 percent male) from three ministries: Health; Social Affairs; and Child, Women and Family Promotion.

Through a process led and facilitated by HFG, the groups had an opportunity to share views,

engage with each other to initiate communities of practice, adopt common procedures, and develop work plans to address priority issues and monitor important indicators. Experts from across the three ministries are now able to work together to better monitor the progress of PRODESS implementation.



RESULT AREA 3

Improved use of health financing data for decision-making

HFG helped build the capacity of stakeholders to analyze and use health financing data to make decisions that impact the health and well-being of Malians. Stakeholders now have more technical capacity to conduct in-depth analyses of health financing data and to use the data to inform vital health policies and programs and improve service delivery. They have learned how to target different audiences with tailored communication products, and understand the importance of using all the data at their disposal to conduct analyses that will be useful to policymakers.

In the past, the large volume of health financing data generated by the government has for the most part been underused in decision-making. For example, the MHPH has lacked the capacity to analyze existing health financing data and use the resulting information to address important issues such as high out-of-pocket health care costs for Malians.

To improve the MHPH's capacity to make use of existing data, we trained national officials from various ministries – including the ministries of health; social development; women, child and family; and finance – as well as academics and research institution fellows to effectively analyze data for informing policies. We supported the MHPH to use Health Accounts, macroeconomic data, and health utilization data to analyze policy issues and develop user-friendly products to help decision-makers address key challenges such as the inequitable allocation of health resources between regions, insufficient health spending, and duplication of funding. With coaching from HFG, the MHPH produced policy briefs and technical notes to help decision makers appreciate the value and policy implications of health financing data.



RESULT AREA 4

Increased engagement between the public and private sectors

HFG's private sector assessment (PSA), conducted in collaboration with the MHPH, helped advance public-private dialogue in the health sector. Through an improved relationship, the MHPH will be able to work more closely with the private sector to address challenges to providing quality health services. It will also enable the MHPH to improve the capacity of the private sector in improving access to health services.

Improving public-private dialogue

HFG published its PSA findings just as political momentum for improving dialogue between the public and private health sectors was building in Mali, following years of mistrust between the two. Both sides welcomed the assessment. HFG's collaborative and interactive PSA dissemination event offered an opportunity to break the ice and opened constructive dialogue between private health sector actors and public health stakeholders. Participants discussed ways to address bottlenecks, such as long delays in accrediting and licensing providers, and how to mitigate conflicts and misunderstandings.

Through PSA dissemination sessions that included guided discussions on the findings, diverse stakeholders – including public and private practitioners, professional associations for physicians, pharmacists, and midwives – were able to build consensus, positioning them all to play a larger role in health service delivery. By facilitating discussions with the MHPH and the Association of Health Professionals, HFG helped build consensus on the PSA recommendations. Following the PSA dissemination workshop, the

Minister of Health is preparing to sign an act pertaining to the Public-Private Dialogue and Consultation Committee, and allocated premises to host the Private Sector Alliance, a group with public and private sector representatives. Both of these important actions promise to enhance public-private dialogue. In addition, the World Bank used the PSA findings to accelerate its support to the Private Sector Alliance through capacity building and governance strengthening.

A new database to inform public-private sector engagement

As part of the PSA process, HFG worked with key stakeholders, including professional associations, to document and consolidate more than 13 existing databases containing information about private-sector health providers. The result – a new, comprehensive database -- provides consolidated data on the number and type of private health providers, their location, the type of services they provide, and any support they receive from development partners. This information will help the MHPH better understand the size and role of the private sector in providing health services, and the availability of health services across Mali's different regions. It will also help the MHPH to better coordinate development partner support. Finally, it will contribute to improved data for decision-making on how the private sector can play a more effective role in the delivery of quality health services.

This new understanding provides an important foundation for further advancing public-private engagement to improve health in Mali.



Participants from government, the private sector, civil society, and professional associations participate in a workshop on the results of the Private Sector Assessment (PSA) in Bamako, Mali in December 2017.



LOOKING FORWARD



SUSTAINABILITY

The transformations described in this report will make a lasting impact on improving health systems in Mali. To foster sustainability, HFG designed and conducted all activities in close collaboration with MHPH officials and ensured their understanding and buy-in of the results of the studies and assessments. We collaborated with MHPH for their input and analysis in the production of the reports and results before strategically disseminating them – organizing small roundtable meetings or large national or regional dissemination workshops – to ensure that the right stakeholders have access to information needed to make reforms.

HFG's efforts will go a long way toward enhancing the implementation of PRODESS, Mali's key strategy for achieving universal health coverage. By building the capacity of the members of the technical working groups, we revived the PRODESS oversight process and restored the visibility and

effectiveness of the groups' interventions. With this improved capacity, the working groups will continue to play a leading role in following up on the recommendations of HFG's health systems assessment and private sector assessment. Furthermore, the working groups are expected to reflect upon and discuss innovative themes as part of their monitoring of PRODESS implementation. The working groups have greater clarity on their role and greater capacity to work effectively to support the national authorities and development partners to increase their impact on the PRODESS implementation

The PSA results will contribute to Mali's efforts to build effective public-private partnerships and enhance the dialogue between key stakeholders. In addition, the unique database of private, for-profit health providers, developed with the support of HFG, provides the MHPH with a greater

understanding of the role of the private sector in providing health services. The database will be housed at the MHPH and will continue to help MHPH officials make informed decisions about how the private sector can play a more effective role in the delivery of quality health services.

Finally, a range of decision makers are better equipped to use data to guide decisions on key health issues as a result of our support. They will be able use the National Health Accounts to inform policy and planning and steer important decisions on health funding.



LESSONS LEARNED

- **Using a proven assessment process provided greater credibility for HSA results.** The HSA Approach enabled a comprehensive and methodical approach to assess Mali's health system. Stakeholders who participated in the assessment recognized the value of the approach, which helped to build consensus around the HSA results.
- **Coordinating technical assistance with windows of opportunity helps increase impact.** Ongoing national efforts to reform health systems offered an opportunity to use HFG's assessments, including the HSA and PSA, to mobilize key actors during meetings such as the roundtable hosted by the Prime Minister in January 2018. The overall recommendations from the roundtable are in line with HFG's recommendations related to promotion of universal health coverage; domestic resource mobilization; accreditation of health care providers; human resources development; strengthened quality control of pharmaceuticals; and public-private partnerships.
- **Employing strategic communications to disseminate assessment findings helped build consensus.** By engaging the right stakeholders and facilitating open dialogue, HFG built consensus and increased interest in the findings from its three assessments. In addition, our staff established credibility for assessment findings and recommendations by using tried-and-tested approaches and being available to address questions and concerns.
- **Flexibility is critical to overcoming obstacles in fragile countries.** The past three years of HFG's technical assistance were marked by a number of significant challenges that delayed or constrained implementation of project activities. For example, numerous key staff changes among HFG's counterparts at the MHPH and the Secretary General's office contributed to delays in completing and disseminating HFG assessments. Security incidents such as the 2015 attack on the Radisson Hotel, travel restrictions, and evacuation of USAID personnel also impeded the implementation of key interventions. The HFG team had to demonstrate flexibility by adapting to new implementation schedules, keeping new ministry staff informed about the project's activities, and undertaking activities rapidly once it was possible.



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OUR RESOURCES

[Mali Private Sector Health Assessment](#)

[Inventory of Mali's Private Health Sector & Proposition of a New Database Format](#) (French)

[Management Assessment of the Secretary General's Office in the Malian Ministry of Health and Public Hygiene](#)

[Mali Health Systems Assessment](#) (French)

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