

World Bank Response to the GAVI HSS Evaluation

10 November 2009

The World Bank appreciates the opportunity to comment on the GAVI HSS Evaluation conducted by HLSP.

The document contains much useful information but may require some fine-tuning regarding its key findings/recommendations. Our comments are as follows:

1. Weak Evidence Base for Report Findings: The tone of the report is positive but little evidence is offered to support some of the statements being made. For example, (p.5 and elsewhere) it mentions that "countries are beginning to achieve results in terms of getting programs underway, although weaknesses in tracking the use of HSS resources make it difficult to assess how well this is being done." In a similar vein, Section 3.2 highlights the lack of alignment and harmonization of GAVI HSS; the significant problems with monitoring; and ability to mitigate risk -- all very serious concerns. But other sections of the report are very positive about GAVI HSS, but without supporting evidence.

2. Results Chain not Clear: The summary report criticizes proposals submitted for lacking details about the conceptual link between inputs and results and notes that while one can determine that funds have been disbursed, it is not possible to determine in most cases on what they have been spent. The ability to monitor activities and results is portrayed as weak and inadequate with insufficient controls to assess accuracy. If these facts are valid, they cast doubts on the generally positive tone of the evaluation. The main conclusion is that projects support inputs which can be assumed to strengthen service delivery and outputs, but it appears that measurable results are hard to come by. This ambiguity is not fully addressed in the summary report.

3. Weak Methodology for Measuring Impact of HSS Funding: While the impact evaluation of HSS funding is difficult for many reasons, the report disappoints in its discussion of the linkages between HSS support and results (Section 2.5). Using a more appropriate methodology such as projecting future coverage based on past trends, and comparing projected coverage with current coverage rates to see if countries with HSS support are on trend, exceed, or are below trend, would yield more useful information.

4. GAVI and Partners - Secretariat or Alliance: The evaluation is critical of the support by GAVI's partners, questioning whether GAVI is receiving "value for money".

Since GAVI is an alliance of its partners, this evaluation is not about the GAVI secretariat but rather the GAVI alliance. It is important to recognize that GAVI's shortcomings are the failings of both the secretariat and the partners. The statement that the approach of technical support has been to "stand back and review" rather than provide actual support is not substantiated. In fact, technical support is demand driven. Also, the Tracking Study found substantial support provided by multilaterals, bilaterals, and CSOs at country level - which contradicts the finding of this report.

5. Solution for Improving Technical Support Simplistic: The report concludes that GAVI should manage TA with a small in-house HSS staff and a small advisory panel and contracting out of services. But no details are provided regarding staffing costs which should not be underestimated. In contrast to the recommendation to increase GAVI's in-house technical support, we should also consider other options such as improved role of partners, better alignment of incentives, and of HSS financing using existing in-country technical capacity. Creating an in-house implementing agency would fundamentally change GAVI's mission and organizational model, primarily as a financing agency.

6. Weaknesses in HSS Applications: The Report points to a number of problems with the current IRC process but does not identify weakness of the current application process itself. If GAVI wishes to retain the application process for some countries (scenario 1), there should be a discussion in the PPC/EC/Board how to make the application process more robust.

7. Detailed Comments: The report contains some errors and misrepresentations which should be corrected:

- (a) Table 20: The World Bank is listed as providing support to implementation of GAVI HSS, but the Bank only does that at the request of the government -- the implication in the table that we are not providing enough support is therefore misleading;
- (b) p85: The report makes an unsubstantiated statement that task team co-chairs were running the task team for their own benefit -- there is no evidence for such claim;
- (c) Technical support figures: If the GAVI workplan budget by agency is not posted on the GAVI website (i.e., in the public domain already), then it must be removed from the report. The analysis comparing the budget to number of countries supported is flawed and can lead to misinterpretations;
- (d) p60 refers to GAVI HSS as a "project" which it is not;
- (e) p71: The amount of resources allocated per country is the reverse of what is stated in the middle of the page -- wealthier countries receive less per capita;
- (f) p85: The reporting structure for the HSS task team has been clear since 2008 when

it switched from advising the Working Group to advising the CEO of GAVI.

8. Way Forward: There is much to be learned from this report for future funding. The most interesting findings/recommendations of the report are the ones relating to the urgency for harmonization and country alignment, the need to invest in both upstream and downstream investments in a complementary fashion, and using common HSS assessments, M&E systems, and harmonized technical support. This clearly points to the importance of moving forward with the joint HSS Platform.