

Technical Support to Sudan Health Transformation Project— Phase II (SHTP II) Trip Report

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Technical Support to the Sudan Health Transformation Project, Phase II (SHTP II)
Trip Report
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Background: The USAID SHTP II project, implemented by MSH, began in February, 2009 with the goal to build on the decentralization of PHC services to improve the health of the South Sudanese people. The SHTP II has three expected results: 1) Expanded access to high impact services; 2) Increased knowledge and demand for services; and 3) Increased southern Sudanese capacity to deliver and manage services. The MOH has implemented several important policies that SHTP II is implementing: 1) The Basic Package of Health and Nutrition Services (BPHNS) will be the foundation of all health services offered at the PHC level; 2) Contracting out of services to NGOs (subcontracting partners) to support the MOH capacity to expand access to and improve the quality of PHC services; and 3) PHC services in the project will concentrate on the County Health Departments and PHC facilities in 14 focus counties. This STTA is provided to support implementation of this goal, results and policies.

Purpose of Trip: The primary objective of the trip was to provide Technical Assistance and support to MSH/Southern Sudan financial management, operations and accounting staff, as well as technical staff who have been delegated signatory authority. Training or systems improvements will be made or recommended on an as required basis. This assistance is intended to orient newly hired finance staff and provide follow-up training with existing staff.

Ms. Gaul will conduct training on the new MSH corporate accounting system and the MSH field accounting system. She will review overall internal control systems to ensure compliance with MSH and USAID policies and identify issues or weaknesses.

Special attention will be given to protocols and systems related to operating multiple projects with a common operating platform, including a review of roles and responsibilities, shared cost allocations and finance and operations policies and procedures.

Activities:

1. If requested, conduct an arrival briefing for USAID.
 - a. An arrival briefing was not requested.
2. Review roles & responsibilities, job descriptions and organizational chart for finance and operations staff
 - a. This was done in part as pre-travel preparation as well as while in-country.
 - b. Patricia Ayite from SPS Project was on leave during my visit. Her role within an integrated finance and operations team needs to be agreed upon. This discussion will occur after the Christmas/New Year holiday break.
3. Provide new or refresher training to all staff related to signatory authority, cost principles and operations policies.
 - a. A general staff meeting was held December 9th. All MSH staff in Juba participated. Training was provided on the above topics, as well as providing updates on anticipated policy and procedural changes in 2011 that will impact MSH Country Offices. Special

attention was given to MSH strict policies with regard to fraud and adherence to business ethics. The meeting/training was co-facilitated with John McKenney, the MSH Security Officer who presented an update on security planning for the upcoming referendum. The session allowed ample time for staff questions and answers.

4. Finalize Memorandum of Understanding related to common operations and finance among projects.
 - a. The existing cost sharing principles remain in force. No changes are required. The Memorandum will be updated in late January or early February to incorporate a revised organizational chart for finance and operations staff and activities. This will allow Roch Ahounou, the Director of Finance and Operations adequate time to assess the present team, as well as determine ways to integrate SPS finance and operations staff.
5. Meet with the senior management of all MSH projects in Southern Sudan to discuss findings and identify any other issues related to finance, accounting and operations.
 - a. A meeting of this group was held on December 8th. John McKenney, the MSH Security officer was also present. In light of the upcoming referendum on independence, security and potential disruptions to operations was the primary area of discussion, although this was interwoven with financial and operational concerns.
6. Conduct intensive training and orientation with Roch Ahounou and Belete Demissie, Accounting and Grants Management, on MSH Field Accounting standards and expectations.
 - a. This was done over the course of the week and focused on the Chart of Accounts, MSH use of QuickBooks and integration with Serenic Navigator, activity coding protocols, documentation requirements and financial management policies.
7. Conduct an exit briefing with USAID within two days of departure.
 - a. No USAID meeting was requested.
8. Submit a trip report, not to exceed 2 pages, within 2 weeks after completion of assignment.

Recommendations: The overarching recommendation is that the procurement process be strengthened, including the creation and use of procurement committees. This recommendation was made over a year ago and was not implemented. This will ensure transparency and improved internal control. Representatives of all projects should be included. The make-up of the committee should change routinely, to involve appropriate end-users, technical experts, etc.

In addition, during the upcoming month or two, Mr. Ahounou should review his team, their skills, and their responsibilities to ensure best utilization of skills and segregation of duties. Ms. Ayite should be integrated more fully into the MSH finance and operations team.

An exit meeting was held with Mr. Ahounou and Demissie to outline all next steps to prepare for the December close, payment of 13th month, and needed adjusting entries to update advance accounts, petty cash balances and the like.

List of Annexes: No annexes attached.

- Deliverables: travel expense report submitted separately.
- List of Persons Met: as detailed above; no external parties were met.
- Meetings Held (organized chronologically): as detailed above: no external meetings held.