

MEETING REPORT

STRENGTHENING AID EFFECTIVENESS IN BELIZE
Using Health as a Tracer Sector

San Ignacio Hotel, Cayo District
Monday May 17, 2010



June 2010

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Prepared by Leaders in International Health Participants – 2010 Cohort
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on behalf of
The United Nations Country Team, Belize

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Introduction



Images from the health sector, Ministry of Health

Aid effectiveness has been in the forefront for multilateral and bilateral partners as well as the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Belize. Though the overall aid to health has increased globally, the increase has been accompanied by factors that have sometimes led to challenges in national coordination and response, and to misalignment between the resources provided and national priorities. In Health, as in other sectors, there are gaps in achieving the desired effects of international aid. The idea of aligning development aid – national and international – with national policies, plans, and strategies that

allow for country ownership; harmonizing partner actions to facilitate efficient management for results and reduction of overall transaction costs; and sustainability, is encouraged not only by the 2005 Paris Declaration and the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action, but also within recipient countries.

The perceived and expressed need to strengthen strategies, mechanisms, and partnerships to establish linkages between international and national development partners and national development priorities, in order to make progress in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and national development objectives, became one of the major factors that lead to the organization of this meeting.

To allow for multisector involvement in the process, the UNCT collaborated with the Ministries of Health, Economic Development, Human Development, and Foreign Affairs to invite a wide cross-section of fifty-four (54) stakeholders from Academia, Multilateral and Bilateral donors and funding agencies, and Non-Governmental and Community-Based Organizations, to share experiences and best practices in international aid in Belize, identify gaps and needs, and agree on the way forward.

In an effort to document the outcome of the meeting and in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the PAHO Leaders in International Health Program (LIHP), the PAHO/WHO country office in Belize invited LIHP participants to develop a summary report outlining the purpose, objectives, main activities, major issues discussed, conclusion, and recommendations. *A list of participants and the meeting agenda are in Annexes I and II, respectively.*

Purpose

Strengthen strategies, mechanisms, and partnerships to improve the effectiveness of development aid in Belize, using health as a tracer sector.

Objectives

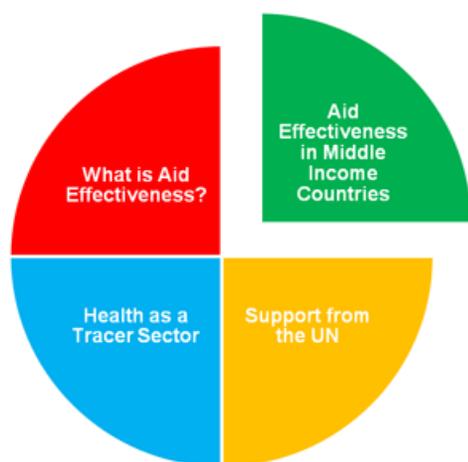
1. Increase awareness of aid effectiveness principles and guidelines.
2. Identify next steps and supporting resources for improving aid effectiveness in health in Belize, including mechanisms for strengthening harmonization, alignment, and national coordination and management of development aid.

Main activities

The meeting was organized to highlight issues related to aid effectiveness, based on the 2005 Paris Declaration and the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action, share Belize's experiences related to this theme, and identify next steps to achieve the meeting objectives.

Dr. Beverley Barnett, PAHO/WHO Representative (PWR), Belize, opened the meeting, welcoming participants and apologizing for the unavoidable absence of the UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Jessica Faieta. She provided a brief description of some of the national frameworks with which development aid could be aligned, and summarized the background and justification for strengthening structures, systems, and mechanisms towards improving aid effectiveness. The PWR also emphasized the importance of intersectoral action in addressing the non-health determinants of health.

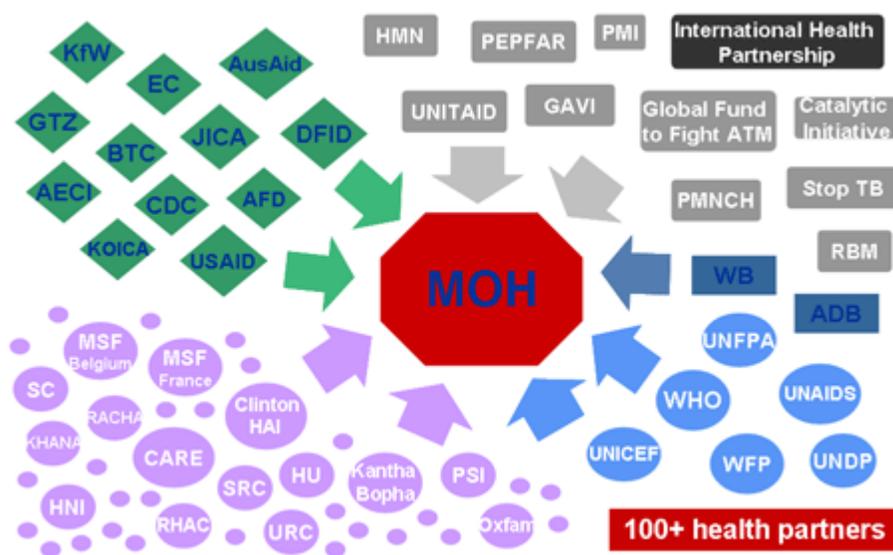
This was followed by remarks from Dr. Peter Allen, Chief Executive Officer in the Ministry of Health, on behalf of the other co-hosting ministries. Dr. Allen highlighted issues related to the effective use of resources and noted that a vision for national development, shared with partners, is important for improving aid effectiveness. Reflection on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the importance of improving the quality and quantity of international aid to achieve them, focusing on coherence of strategies, was the main theme of remarks by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Assistant Resident Representative in Belize, Ms. Kristine Blokhuis, who also shared with participants the approach of the United Nations System in the country.



Mr. Gert Danielsen, Aid Effectiveness and South-South Cooperation Specialist from UNDP's Regional Centre in Panama, underscored the theme of the meeting by sensitizing participants to the principles and framework of aid effectiveness in relation to Paris Declaration (PD) 2005 and the Accra Agenda for Action (2008). He noted that the PD has 5 key pillars – national ownership, alignment, harmonization, managing for results, and mutual accountability – with 12 indicators of progress. He further highlighted the usefulness of these agreements, including the progress made at the Accra High Level Forum, in moving towards the achievement of

the MDGs, sharing scenarios from selected middle income countries, examples where Health was used as a Tracer Sector, and options for the UN's response to aid effectiveness demands.

Ms. Marilyn Entwistle, Health Systems and Services Advisor, PAHO/WHO Belize, introduced a planning tool to strengthen the health planning cycle developed by the International Health Partnership Plus (IHP+). This global partnership initiative facilitates positioning the health sector to put into practice the Paris and Accra principles on aid effectiveness, and focuses on the development of a robust national health plan/strategy, with the aim of improving health services and health outcomes, particularly for the poor and vulnerable.



Health Partnerships in One Country

In sharing the Belize experience on aid effectiveness, Chief Executive Officers from the Ministries of Health, and Human Development, and the Foreign Services Officer in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, participated in a panel discussion. This medium provided an opportunity for participants to gain better insight into the structure, organization, cooperation, and collaboration with national and international partners that is pivotal to alignment, harmonization, monitoring, and evaluation of international aid. The panel presentations and subsequent discussion highlighted existing national multisectoral bodies and brought forth key areas that could be considered for strengthening strategies, mechanisms, and partnerships among social sector and other ministries to improve aid effectiveness in Belize.

Summary of issues discussed

The Health Systems and Services Advisor, PAHO/WHO Belize, highlighted following five issues:¹

1. Progress towards the health MDGs remains **inadequate**
2. Many health system constraints are **unaddressed**
3. Global & domestic investment in health is **insufficient**
4. International funding is **unpredictable**
5. Support to countries is **inefficient** – rising numbers of partners; risks of fragmentation, duplication

The Aid Effectiveness and South-South Cooperation Specialist raised the following key issues:²

1. Importance of ownership:
 - Ownership is key to the entire process of aid effectiveness.
 - Countries must define operational development strategies.
 - Development aid should be based on countries' priorities and needs.
 - Ownership should go beyond the executive, and include stakeholders such as parliament, civil society, the private sector, and the media, to mention a few.
2. Need for better alignment of aid:
 - There is a need for reliable country systems that use the principles and concept of public financial management, and development partners need to use these principles.
 - Alignment with country priorities.
 - Strengthening capacity through coordinated efforts – consideration of Sector Wide Approaches (SWAs) and abolition of parallel Project Implementation Units (PIUs).
 - Predictability of aid, as well as aid that is untied – no conditionalities, with a focus on the country, rather than on donors' political agendas.
3. Need for better harmonization of strategies, plans and mechanisms that would reduce transaction costs and allow for an enhanced level of cooperation and coordination among ministries, NGOs, and UN agencies.
4. Importance of managing for results – the focus should be on results-oriented frameworks.
5. Benefits of mutual accountability.

¹ Entwistle M. International Health Partnership Plus. Presentation at Aid Effectiveness Meeting, Cayo District, Belize, May 17, 2010.

² Danielsen G. Aid Effectiveness (AE) Principles: Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda for Action. Presentation at Aid Effectiveness Meeting, Cayo District, Belize, May 17, 2010.

The panel presentations noted ongoing national initiatives to improve aid effectiveness in Belize, including:

- Nascent efforts for strengthening national coordination, such as the Caucus of CEOs and establishing policy coordination and planning units in additional ministries (e.g. Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment);
- Better delineation of priorities and needs through strategic and operational planning (e.g. Ministry of Health);
- Improved resource allocation and tracking, through program and multi-year budgeting (e.g. Ministry of Human Development);
- Development of aid tracking systems (e.g. Ministry of Economic Development and Ministry of Foreign Trade); and
- Involvement of the Belizean Diaspora, through creation of a Belizean Diaspora Medical Brigade, which could perhaps provide a model for other sectors, and establishment of a national volunteer corps, which will collaborate with other volunteer groups (e.g. Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

Conclusion



Participants in the Aid Effectiveness Meeting

Subsequent to the presentations and after much discussion of issues surrounding aid effectiveness, participants agreed that there is an urgent need for better coordination of efforts, from both donor agencies and recipient countries, to achieve the level of ownership, alignment, harmonization, and managing for results stated in the Paris Declaration. As a country, Belize's ongoing work towards completion of the national development agenda, Horizon

2030, and the Medium Term Development Strategy, would allow for appropriate priority setting and shared responsibilities. However, given the country's limited human and financial resources, the capacity to carry out the functions associated with strengthening aid effectiveness is seen as a real challenge.

Considering the global economic crises, which contribute directly to the shrinking international and national resource pools, there is an urgent need to maximize the use of available resources at all levels, through agreed upon strategies, plans and mechanisms, and to be targeted in the predictability of aid flow in country.

There is also a need for mutual agreements and coordinated efforts from both donor partners and recipient countries, to place special emphasis on renewed approaches in the negotiation, provision, and execution of development aid, if recipient countries are to truly achieve the intended results of international aid. The meeting emphasized that national development partners should also be included in efforts to improve national ownership, alignment of aid, harmonization of partners' actions, managing for results, and mutual accountability.

The representatives of the co-hosting ministries requested that next steps build on current national efforts and that relevant systems and mechanisms be kept simple, without compromising their usefulness and effectiveness. The CEOs undertook to put aid effectiveness and the meeting's recommendations on the agenda of the next Caucus of CEOs, scheduled for the next week, while the UNCT undertook to discuss how best it could support national partners in advancing the recommendations.

It was also agreed that a summary report of the meeting would be developed, and the report, with the presentations made, would be posted on the PAHO/WHO and UNCT Belize websites, respectively <http://new.paho.org/blz/> and <http://www.unbelize.org/index.html>.

Recommendations

1. The Ministry of Economic Development should be the focal point for coordination of international aid and strengthening aid effectiveness.
2. A capacity assessment should be conducted of the Ministry of Economic Development and the Ministry of Health regarding aid coordination and aid management, and capacity development supported as necessary.
3. A mechanism to track development aid in the country should be established.
4. Renewed efforts should be made to improve development partner coordination and harmonization.

Annex I

Participants' List

Strengthening Aid Effectiveness in Belize using Health as a Tracer Sector

San Ignacio Hotel, Cayo District

May 17, 2010

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Annex II

MEETING: STRENGTHENING AID EFFECTIVENESS IN BELIZE USING HEALTH AS A TRACER SECTOR Monday, 17 May 2010, San Ignacio Hotel, Cayo District

AGENDA (updated post-meeting)

Chair: INCAP Advisor, PAHO/WHO Belize

8:30	Registration	
9:20 am	National anthem; prayer	
9:25	Welcome	PAHO/WHO Representative
9:30	Introduction of participants	
9:35	Remarks	Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Health
9:1040	Remarks	UNDP Assistant Resident Representative, Belize
9:50	Aid Effectiveness (AE) principles: Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda for Action	UNDP AE Specialist
10:40	Discussion	
10:55	<i>Break</i>	
11:25	AE – International Health Partnership Plus	PAHO/WHO Health Systems & Services Advisor
12 noon	Discussion	
12:30 pm	<i>Lunch</i>	
1:40 pm	Panel presentation on AE – the Belize experience	Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Health, and Human Development (Moderator: INCAP Advisor, PAHO/WHO)
2:25	Discussion	
3:10	Synthesis/Next steps/Way forward	UNDP AE Specialist (Moderator)
4:00	Close	PAHO/WHO Representative