Information Dissemination and Publication Strategy

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1. BACKGROUND

1.1. During the first phase of the LAC Health Sector Reform Initiative, an information and communication strategy was collectively agreed upon by all partners and implemented. The objective was to improve HSR and health systems policy making in the target countries through the use of several information dissemination mechanisms to ensure the timely delivery of important information, tools and methodologies. Moreover, the various methods used attempted to ensure that connectivity challenges existing in some of the countries did not preclude access to information.

1.2. A major focus of the LAC Health Sector Reform second phase is to actively disseminate information about HSR and to market the project among institutions and individuals involved in its implementation, as well as other interested parties. Thus, in the second phase, through a process of consultation with the LAC HSR Initiative partners PAHO has revised and formulated an information dissemination and publication strategy.

1.3. The proposal for a new strategy includes the following components: (1) Type, format and frequency of publications; (2) Partner roles and responsibilities; (3) Peer review process for publications; (4) User satisfaction mechanisms with publications and disseminated materials, (5) Publications based on country needs and (6) Procedures to Revise Dissemination Strategy.

2. TYPE, FORMAT AND FREQUENCY OF PUBLICATIONS

2.1. Type of Publications

There are three major types of materials produced by the LAC HSR Initiative partners for dissemination, which include:

- Printed publications,

- Periodic bulletins, and

- Other relevant information on HSR, such as

  - Health systems profiles;
  - Health sector analyses;
  - Analyses on monitoring and evaluation of HSR;
  - Grey literature

Such materials are disseminated using primarily three mechanisms: printed hard copies, the LAC HSR Initiative web site, and CD-ROMs.

2.2. Format of Publications

Although there is not a set standard format for Initiative publications, it is expected that publications will follow a general standard format including sections such as executive summary, introduction, conceptual framework and methodology, analysis of results, recommendations and conclusions. Additionally, all knowledge products (essential Initiative publications, tools, CD-ROMs and other materials) distributed through the Initiative must bear the Initiative logo.

2.2.1. Printed Publications

From feedback gathered via surveys and through personal contacts with participants in forums and study tours it has become evident that that there is a demand, and in some cases, a stated preference for printed publications. Hard copies are perceived as more tangible and permanent, and their distribution bypasses technological problems that are still difficult to resolve in many of the target countries. Thus, the Initiative produces two types of publications:

- Regular publications – Contain specific technical information targeted for middle level technical professionals.

- Special Edition publications – will meet the following three guidelines:
  1) comprehensive reviews of regional policies, programs etc. from which countries can learn and apply best practices; 2) descriptions of cutting-edge work that is particularly relevant to Latin America; and 3) feasible within partner budget. As a general guideline, Special Editions are high profile policy briefs developed specifically for senior level policy makers.

Both publication series address key health sector reform topics. However, Special Edition publications usually highlight a topic of preeminent importance for health sector reform and target senior level health policy makers. All printed publications will undergo the Peer Review process (see section 4) and it is expected that Special Edition publications will undergo a more rigorous Peer Review process involving high level external experts. A table with proposed publications for FY03-04 by partner is attached.

2.2.2. Periodic Bulletins

Reform in Motion will continue to be the LAC HSR newsletter. In Phase II it has undergone a design change to reflect the new look of the Initiative. The newsletter will include more in-depth analysis of themes and will highlight lessons learned from the first phase of the initiative as well as focus on future trends in health sector reform. Below are the changes to the sections of the newsletter, which more closely correspond to the expected results of phase II of the Initiative.

Reform in Motion

Phase I	Phase II
Editorial Page: - Introduces the theme of the issue	Editorial - Piece that sets the theme of the issue
Feature Section: - Highlights current partners activities	Tracking Health Reform - Articles focusing on the issue's theme - Institution building/capacity building
Health Reform Toolbox - Highlights new tools produced by the Initiative	Best Practices - Tools/methodologies assessed/developed by initiative partners or others in the area of HSR
Spotlight on Initiative Activities - Highlights conferences/meetings/partners activities	Cross-Country/ Country Experiences - Focus on a cross-country or particular country reform initiative/process/innovation - Interview with a national authority working on HSR in a particular country
Country Chronicle - Focus on reforms or innovations in a particular country	Resource Guide - New references/publications and web links
Resource Guide - New references/publications/web links	Networking - Meetings/conferences/events

2.2.3. Other relevant information on HSR

- Health systems profiles
- Health sector analyses
- Analyses on monitoring and evaluation of HSR
- Grey literature

3. PARTNER ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1. Publications

Each partner will be responsible for the entire production process of their publications following the guidelines and design agreed to in the Steering Committee. Partners are also responsible for mailing their own publications. PAHO is responsible for posting the publication on the Initiative web site after receiving an electronic copy from the partner.

3.2.   Network of Contacts and Distribution List

LACHSR Initiative partners have compiled a list of Initiative contacts representing ministers of health, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, social security institutions and donor organizations. The list is utilized to distribute essential Initiative publications, tools, CD-ROMs, and other materials to countries.

It is essential to identify and agree on a distribution list that spells out who will be receiving hard copies and CD-ROMs. Partners need to review the current distribution list and discuss any changes to be made. The contact list must be reviewed by the Initiative partners every 4 months to keep the list updated.

Once a distribution list is agreed upon, all partners will be responsible for sending copies of their publication or CD-ROM produced to every person and/or institution on that list. The final number of the new printed publication covers to be ordered will be determined after such agreement has been reached. Initiative partners also use their own list of contacts to distribute documents related to the Initiative.

3.3.   Website

The website serves as a window to the Initiative and has continued to be a key mechanism for disseminating information. In order to make information more accessible to users, the site is being upgraded to a database driven system, which will make the information on the site searchable. Furthermore, the design and look of the site is being updated to make the information more visually accessible. Also, the logo and publications covers are being updated to have a uniform look.

To keep the website updated and make it a dynamic center of information dissemination, individual partners are responsible for sending promptly new publications, tools and methodologies to the site's webmaster: Ana Milena Paredes, (paredesa@paho.org). Users also have the option of clicking on a link labeled 'contact us,' which will provide PAHO's mailing address and a contact phone number. The website administrator will also have the option of using a group email tool to allow for sending out an email to all or a selected group of contacts. Each of these email messages will contain mandatory text with instruction for the user on how to unsubscribe from future mailings if desired.

The sections of the website that need frequent updating, such as events, news, and links will require that partners contact on a continuous basis the webmaster to keep the website current. It is proposed that at each Steering Committee meeting, contributions from partners to the website be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that sufficient new information is being generated to keep the site's information up to date.

The Initiative site will be cross referenced with other sites serving as resources on topics related to health sector reform such as *Biblioteca Virtual en Salud* (BIREME), UK Department for International Development (DFID) Health Systems Resource Centre, World Bank Health Systems Development (HSD), Development Gateway and LACHSR Initiative partner sites.

3.4.   Periodic Bulletin

The Steering Committee will decide on the theme and content of each newsletter. Partners will be responsible for timely preparation and submission of their contributions. Articles submitted for inclusion in the newsletter should be sent to: Carolyn Shelton (sheltonc@paho.org) one month prior to the scheduled newsletter date. Though the Steering Committee also has the final decision on the content of each Newsletter, as Editor, PAHO is responsible for producing an outline of suggested content. PAHO is further responsible for the printing and distribution of the newsletter to the distribution list agreed upon. In addition to hard copy distribution, the newsletter will be posted on the Initiative website as well as sent out to those individuals on the contact list with email addresses i.e. via an electronic distribution list containing members of the Initiative.

3.5.   CD-ROMs

Another dissemination tool used for overcoming some of the connectivity challenges existing in LAC is the production of CD-ROMs that can be readily distributed and accessed without the user having to connect to the internet. PAHO has already successfully produced and distributed CDs containing the Grey Literature and Thesaurus Database, the Health Systems Country Profiles. A new CD is being produced to disseminate the second version of the Health Systems Profiles, Monitoring and Evaluation of Health Sector Reforms, and a revised and expanded Grey Literature CD.

The Steering Committee has agreed to produce a CD-ROM with all existing publications including the tools produced within the framework of the Initiative (1st and 2nd phase) towards the end of FY04.

4.   PEER REVIEW

The Steering Committee (SC) of the LAC HSR Initiative has instituted a quality enhancement Peer Review process for author(s) who are submitting documents to be published under the LAC HSR Initiative. The main objective is to obtain an independent view of the technical quality of the document and its contribution to Initiative goals.

The Peer Review is an informal panel Review conducted by the Steering Committee including two additional external (to the Initiative) reviewers. It is expected that the external reviewers will serve on the panel voluntarily and will not be reimbursed monetarily for their efforts. The Review is to be an informal and collegial process. Discussions between the author(s) and the peer reviewers must be frank and open. Hence, what is said in the discussions is held confidential.

Any document to be branded as a product of the Initiative should undergo the Peer Review process. The Review should take place when it is potentially most useful to improve quality i.e. when the draft content is reasonably firm.

Generally, a Peer Review panel consists of: a panel chair, SC members and two experts on issues that are key to ensuring the technical quality of the specific document under review. SC members have the option to invite a colleague from their respective organization to take their place on the panel as the case may arise that a SC member is not an expert on a specific issue. The panel chair must be a member of the SC and SC members should alternate serving the role of panel chair.

In order to keep the Peer Review panel to a manageable size, only one representative from each partner organization represented on the SC should attend the Peer Reviews. External panel members will be selected by PAHO, as the coordinating mechanism for the Peer Reviews. Upon request for a Peer Review, PAHO and the requesting organization will determine the required expertise for the panel. Therefore, the selection of external reviewers will depend upon the issues covered in the publication submitted for review.

Once a Review panel (SC plus 2 external reviewers) has been established, the reviewers are sent the relevant document(s) along with a brief list of bullet points on which the author(s) seek feedback. This list should highlight specific areas for which feedback is sought and pose questions to the Peer Review panel in areas for strengthening the document. It is expected that this list will help guide the peer reviewers in their reading of the document(s) and in providing comments. The document(s) subject to review should be sent to the reviewers at least one week before the scheduled Review.

Panel members will have two weeks to review the document and share their comments electronically. If deemed necessary by the author(s) and the panel, the Review may be conducted in a meeting instead of electronically. The author(s) has between 2-4 weeks1 to re-submit the revised final document to the Steering Committee for final approval. In the final document, all peer reviewers should be acknowledged for their insights and expertise. The Review, conducted in a discussion format, is designed to be collegial and helpful.

5. Monitoring User Satisfaction

5.1. In the context of the website upgrade, user satisfaction pop-up boxes will appear when a user closes a tool or methodology, asking the user to rate the document. Additionally, a link labeled 'survey' will direct users to a user satisfaction survey (questions to be set at a later date) in which users will be asked up to but no more than 10 questions along with an open-ended comment box. The space for open-ended comments will invite users to suggest content areas they would like to see on the Initiative website. User comments will be automatically forwarded to the webmaster who will be responsible for directing the user comments and/or requests to the appropriate contact person in the Initiative.

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1 Given the stage at which the document for review is submitted and the nature of comments received, this time frame can be amended.

The webmaster will also be responsible for reporting on a monthly basis to the Steering Committee the following indicators related to website use: number of site visits, number of return visits and number of unique users. The Steering Committee will use all of the above feedback mechanisms to assess how site content is meeting in-country needs.

5.2.   In order to capture user satisfaction of the information disseminated via CD-ROM or hard copy, a short evaluation form to be mailed or faxed will accompany the CDs. This form can be sent by the recipient via mail or fax. The forms will be faxed back to a PAHO or USAID [name(s)] focal point that will be responsible for keeping track of these results.

5.3.   Once a year a survey form regarding the information produced and disseminated by the Initiative partners will be sent via mass email by the site administrator to the distribution list of contacts. Questions for the survey will be agreed upon by the Steering Committee.

6.   PUBLICATIONS BASED ON COUNTRY NEEDS

In line with PAHO's and partners objective of maintaining a needs based approach with LAC countries, all knowledge products (includes essential publications, tools, CD-ROMs and other materials) produced by Initiative partners should be based on in-country needs. The identification of country needs will be channeled through PAHO representative offices as well as the USAID missions. This will be part of the leading criteria for quality in the Peer Review Process.

7.   BUILDING A VIRTUAL INTELLIGENCE CENTER - VIRTUAL CAMPUS

Given that Initiative information is disseminated through the Clearinghouse fosters shared learning across national boundaries and time zones, it is directly linked with the objectives of the newly established Virtual Campus. As the hub of a dynamic information handling system with links to other resources, the Clearinghouse helps users navigate the information highways for practically instantaneous access to substantive data, and in doing so empowers stakeholders to participate in informed decision-making. By providing a user-friendly environment that promotes the diffusion of knowledge and where lessons can be learned, a virtual intelligence center has real potential to stimulate thinking and mobilize collective action. The symbolism of the virtual intelligence center is therefore an intuitive way of highlighting the process of shared learning as the key to sustaining health sector reforms.

8. Procedures to Revise Dissemination Strategy

The Strategy will be revised by the Steering Committee on an annual basis, as needed.