

Assessment of Support to Networks and Future Prospects Strategic Plan

Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research (AHPSR)

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Executive Summary

Over the past three-years, the Alliance supported a select number of regional and large country HPSR networks. All parties recognize that this experience has been positive and that it has considerable potential to build on complementarities.

Responding to a mandate from its Board, the Alliance Secretariat commissioned a review and assessment of this collaboration. The review included three related activities: a consultation workshop, a follow-up survey with the participants, and a review of documentation. The process involved representatives of networks funded in the past and others who could become collaborating partners in the future.

This report presents the findings and conclusions of the assessment. Section One describes the consultation and reporting methodology. Section Two presents the main findings and recommendations; and section three proposes a strategic plan for collaboration over the short-term building on the experience to date.

The review revealed important differences among the networks in thematic focus and activities, geographic scope and coverage, structure and organization, membership, access to information and communication technologies (ICTs), and resources. The networks identified access to funding and the lack of core support for coordination as the most important factors affecting their sustainability and / or viability. The opportunities of partnership with the Alliance were valued as a means to ensure continuity and as a conduit to greater visibility, awareness and access to global HPSR information, suggesting that acting as a ‘network or networks’ is a core role for the Alliance around which other global functions could take place.

The review also indicated that strengthening collaboration must begin by ensuring fluid and timely exchanges of information and closer cooperation among the networks and the Alliance. This involves re-defining the notion of partnership, scaling-up targeted support, greater concentration of activities, reinforcement of structures and organization, identification of a common ground, adoption of a brokering role, better use of ICTs, and setting up monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

The proposed plan gives collaboration with HPSR networks in capacity building a central role in the Alliance’s future. This implies re-valuing the strategic importance of networks to carry out its mission, including a greater delegation and decentralization of activities, consultation on priorities, focus on core activities and adapting budget allocations accordingly. It presupposes deliberate efforts by those involved to enhance future partnership practices, mechanisms and systems to achieve common goals. It suggests further focusing the Alliance objectives, strategies and activities in making use of and supporting networking opportunities with the greatest comparative advantage and multiplier potential.

The plan builds on five strategic directions and twenty-one recommendations. The strategic directions for enhanced collaboration are: Strengthening the networks' performance, establishing enhanced partnerships, seeking funding sources and inter-cooperation, enhancing networking and communications, and exploring future prospects and opportunities.

Two main complementary courses of action are suggested to carry out the proposed plan to enhance cooperation with and among networks. These involve, first, maintaining targeted support to key networks on a transitional basis to achieve a greater focus on capacity building, and second, exploring and supporting the formation a Consortium of HPSR networks *under a renewed notion of partnership*, as a key arm of the future role of the Alliance.

The former requires ensuring the existence of key networks in strategic regions / countries during a transition period, that could collaborate with the Alliance in the future under a new approach to partnerships and networking. The later implies setting up a Task Force to explore the feasibility of a Consortium of HPSR networks under the institutional umbrella of the Alliance. Its purpose would be to strengthen horizontal collaboration in promoting the generation, dissemination and use of knowledge for enhancing health systems performance.

Under a new notion of partnership, this Consortium will bring together a selected number of HPSR networks around common objectives as direct partners and main representatives of the Alliance in their respective regional or national environments. The proposed plan builds on the collective view that the Alliance is a source of yet untapped potential for breaking barriers, learning from experiences across regions, and building a coalition of key HPSR players to advance shared goals in a highly complex global HPSR environment.

**Assessment of Support to Networks and Future Prospects
Strategic Plan
Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research (AHPSR)**

Introduction

The Alliance for Health Policy & Systems Research (AHPSR) was established in March 2000 as an initiative of the Global Forum for Health Research¹ and the World Health Organization (WHO). Its aim is to “promote the generation, dissemination and use of knowledge for enhancing health systems performance.” The Alliance seeks to fill a gap in the availability and appropriate use of knowledge associated with low capacity to produce, disseminate and use health policy research.

Within this framework, the Alliance currently pursues three objectives:

- To stimulate the generation and synthesis of knowledge, encompassing evidence, tools and methods
- To facilitate the development of capacity for the generation, dissemination and use of knowledge among researchers, policy makers and other stakeholders
- To promote the dissemination and use of knowledge to improve the performance of health systems

Central to achieving these objectives is bridging the gap between actors and stakeholders in the research-to-policy continuum. In such a context, effective networking and key partnerships are fundamental strategies to ensuring that the production, dissemination, communication and consumption of research results have measurable impact on public policy decisions and policy-making. Specifically, and as part of its *Strategic Framework 2003-2005*, the Alliance “aims to provide bridges across regional and country networks and to strengthen the capacity of networking and interfacing mechanisms at all levels.”²

Over the past three-years, the Alliance has supported and collaborated with a select number of regional and large country HPSR networks. Through its support, it “strengthen the capacity of regional networks to advocate for health policy and systems research, support the undertaking and dissemination of research, and facilitate the research to policy process.” In so doing, it reinforced the managerial capacity of the networks’ secretariats and implemented some of its own global activities.

Both the Alliance and the networks recognize that this collaboration has considerable potential to build on mutual complementarities. They agree that capacity building in health policy and systems research is an area growing in importance that could benefit from

¹ <http://www.globalforumhealth.org>

² The Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research, “*Strategic Framework 2003-2005*.” Draft for Final Board Approval Following Comments at the 6th Board Meeting, London, November 21 & 22, 2002.

identifying lessons and best practices, and disseminating policy relevant information thus assisting multiple actors, including researchers, policy-makers, health practitioners, donors and international organizations, and ultimately the disadvantaged.

In response to a mandate from its Board, the Alliance Secretariat commissioned a performance assessment of the past three-years of collaboration with regional and large-country HPSR networks. The review involved a consultation with networks' representatives invited by the Alliance Secretariat to participate. The review integrated an assessment of the performance of the agreements with the selected HPSR networks, the identification of lessons learned leading to improving mutual support and co-operation, and a wider dialogue with other networks that could become collaborating partners.

This report presents the results of the consultation and draws a strategic plan for short-term collaboration between the Alliance and HPSR networks. The findings and recommendations will assist the Alliance Secretariat to build on the accumulated experience of supporting networks as a means to reaching its aim of promoting "the generation, dissemination and use of knowledge for enhancing health systems performance."³

The report includes three sections. Section One, describes the methodology for the consultation process and the preparation of this report. Its purpose is to outline the parameters followed in light of the Terms of Reference (TORs) prepared by the Alliance.

Section Two, presents an overview of the findings from a three-day consultation workshop organized and held by the Alliance Secretariat in Geneva, Switzerland⁴, a follow-up informal survey with the participants at the workshop to further explore some key issues raised at the meeting, and a review of available documentation. This section offers recommendations to advance collaboration between the Alliance and regional and / or country HPSR networks.

Section Three, offers a plan for short-term collaboration reflecting the input from the consultation process and building on the networking experience to date. The plan addresses specifically the relationship between the Alliance and the support it had and could provide to HPSR networks under a re-defined understanding of partnership, looking at networking processes and practices, support and networking mechanisms, and forms of mutual support and complementarities.

³ Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research, "Mission, Partnership and Products 2000-2003"

⁴ A post-workshop report submitted to the Alliance Secretariat in June 2004 presents a synthesis of the main issues addressed in the consultation meeting in Geneva, the workshop methodology, and offers some preliminary conclusions.

Section One. The Consultation Methodology

1.1 Mandate

Following initial contacts, the Alliance Secretariat commissioned the *Social Development & Policy Group Ltd* (SDP) to carry out an assessment of the support the Alliance provided over the past three years to country and regional networks, and to identify prospects for further collaboration over the short-term. SDP Ltd. received specific Terms of Reference (See Annex 1), outlining the objectives, suggested approach and activities for the assessment exercise.

The objectives of the consultancy were to:

- Identify issues and lessons for the Alliance and for networks derived from the collaboration agreements in the past three years.
- Produce a strategic plan for short-term collaboration between the Alliance and regional networks, assessing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of different options.

Based on these objectives the consultancy produced a performance review of the collaboration in the past three years; consulted with a number of networks on their experience, needs and expectations, and prepared a strategic plan for short-term collaboration.

1.2 Activities

The assessment included three distinct sets of activities: a three-day workshop organized by the Alliance Secretariat and held at WHO in Geneva, Switzerland between the 24th and 26th of June 2004; an informal survey and follow-up with the participants at the workshop to further explore key issues raised at the meeting, and a review of available documentation.

1.2.1 The Review of Documentation

Following agreement on the Terms of Reference and time-line, the Alliance Secretariat provided the consultant with a variety of documents, including position papers, progress reports, and planning documents relevant to its networking and collaboration activities. In some instances, this also included documents prepared by the networks.

A detailed examination of other information available in the Alliance's Internet site ⁵ and in the related sites of some of the networks participating in the assessment complemented the review. The analysis of this information was useful to profile the relationship and work of the networks and the Alliance and provided a base to plan and develop the approach to facilitate the consultation workshop.

⁵ www.alliance-hpsr.org

Following the workshop and the follow-up survey additional information became available for review, some shared by the Coordinators. A review of the research literature on networking in international development, evaluation of networks, the role of international and donor organizations in supporting networking and the dissemination of research results, and on capacity building, complemented the information available.

1.2.2 The Workshop

This event included two sequential meetings facilitated by the consultant. The agenda and the facilitation of the meeting were intended to engage the participants in a process of active learning using their collective experience and to identify future courses of action.

The first one-day meeting included four Coordinators representing the networks that had received support from the Alliance in the past. A second two-day meeting included these four Coordinators plus representatives of four other networks invited by the Alliance Secretariat to participate, three of which are at a planning stage.⁶

The purpose of the first day was to launch a joint assessment of the performance of the “collaboration agreements.”⁷ Specifically, it focussed on the exchange of experiences and the identification of factors affecting the performance of the networks, their results, their capacity to reach the intended audience, and their relationship with the Alliance. The agenda had three dimensions: progress and achievements to date, operations and collaboration processes, and reach and impact of the networks’ activities. To favour a frank exchange among the participants and with the facilitator, the representatives from the Alliance left the meeting after the initial welcoming remarks.

This part of the consultation included a multi-pronged approach covering five related areas pertinent to the experience of the networks working with the Alliance:

- **Capacity Mapping** included the review of actual and desirable strengths of the networks and their sustainability implications, allowing the participants to outline strengths and weaknesses, and share successful and unsuccessful practices.

⁶ The first day of the workshop included representatives from the Network for Health Systems and Services Research in the Southern Cone of Latin America (Dr Celia Maria de Almeida); the Health Economics and Policy Network in Africa, HEPNet (Prof. Di McIntyre); the China Network for Training & Research in Health Economics & Financing, CHERTN (Prof. Li Yaqing), and the Asia-Pacific Health Economics Network, APHEN (Dr Phua Kai Hong). The second and third day included representatives of the Inter-American Network on health Policies José Luis Bobadilla (Ms Teresa de Mucha) from the Mexican Health Foundation, and from three networks at a planning stage: an emerging network in India (Dr Lalit Kant), the East Mediterranean Health Research Forum (EMHR) (Dr Kassem Kassak), and the Caribbean Regional Health Policy Health Systems Research Network (Prof. Elsie Le Franc). Representing the Alliance were Dr Miguel Angel Gonzalez-Block and Mr Chris Zielinski. Dr Daniel Morales-Gómez, from the Social Development & Policy Group, facilitated the meetings.

⁷ In this context, a “Collaboration Agreement” is the granting document reflecting the terms agreed upon between the Alliance and the recipient network, outlining the specific activities a network will carry out and report on as a counterpart to the financial support provided by the Alliance.

- **Management of Obstacles and Risks** involved a review and discussion of obstacles encountered, related weaknesses, and approaches followed in managing their impact on the networks.
- **Financing and Revenue Generation** included a collective analysis of the networks' capacity to access and generate resources, looking at individual experiences, options and opportunities, actions taken, and lessons learned.
- **Collaboration Assessment** identified issues, characterized individual experiences of working with the Alliance, and led to a discussion of the relationship with the Alliance vis-à-vis other partners.
- **Self-assessment of Effectiveness** focused on the identification of “best practices” and their actual reach and impact in the past three years. The participants verbalized what they considered the value added, the comparative advantage, and the difference made by their activities and association with the Alliance.

The second and third day of the workshop built on the previous day's discussions, expanded the consultation to other networks, and included members of the Alliance Secretariat. The purpose was to review experiences and progress sharing information on practices, innovations and lessons learned, identifying common strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks affecting HPRS networking.

The participants presented a profile of their network and information on their progress. In the case of the established networks, the presentation reviewed current activities. In other cases, the presentations focused on the steps to develop and formalize a network and the ideas about activities on the drawing board. The exchange also provided the participants with information about the Alliance and its resources and led to a discussion of approaches and mechanisms for future collaboration.

The workshop provided the participants, including the representatives from the Alliance, with an opportunity to re-assess their collaboration experience, identify common interests and concerns, and identify future options. Concerning the latter, the workshop was a step forward in gathering input into the development of the Alliance's strategic plan for future collaboration with HPRS networks.

1.2.3 The Follow-up Survey

After the analysis of the presentations and discussions at the workshop, all the participants received an electronic survey questionnaire (See Annex 2) seeking additional information. At the time of the workshop, it became clear that electronic communication was the most appropriate way to follow-up due to the time constraints of the Coordinators and the recommendation of the Alliance Secretariat of that the performance of the agreements be assessed “without exposing networks to an unacceptable burden.”

The questionnaire included sixteen open questions asking for additional details about the current state of the networks, future plans and expectations, and their overall assessment of the collaboration with the Alliance. The intention was to explore more in depth some of the issues raised at the meeting, crosscheck information gathered at the workshop, and offer the Coordinators an added opportunity to provide input into the Alliance planning.

Questionnaires were sent to all eight participants at the workshop. Seven responded within the suggested deadline, some including additional documentation.⁸ The preliminary qualitative analysis of the responses, prompted the consultant to request additional information from the Alliance Secretariat about some of the specific issues frequently raised by the Coordinators.

1.3 Analysis of the Information

The approach to the preparation of this report, involved comparing information gathered from the networks as a departure point to drawing recommendations and developing the strategic plan for short-term collaboration. It combined various methods relevant to capacity development analysis, organizational performance and capacity evaluation.

The examination of the collaboration to date and the assessment of performance that can be broadly attributed to the relationships between the networks and the Alliance⁹ looked at the external and internal environments. The fact that in the past, the Alliance maintained formal collaboration with four of the eight networks consulted, and only informal relationships with the others received due consideration. This led to examine available information on the systems; mechanisms and process of strategic planning in place, the levels of consultations involved, and the core competencies and comparative advantages the networks and the Alliance bring or could bring into the relationship.

The basic principles of Strategic Analysis were used to sort out the opinions and suggestions put forward by the participants and identify alternatives that could meet expectations and bring about the type of results pursued by the Alliance and by the networks. The steps suggested to integrate the plans of the Alliance reflect possible lines of action that have the potential to enhance future collaboration and impact.

A SWOT analysis framework served as a guide throughout the consultation to collectively identify strengths (S) weaknesses (W), opportunities (O) and threats (T) intervening in the relationship between the networks and the Alliance. This approach assisted in profiling the networks' individual capacities to achieve their objectives as well as to understanding the decision-making processes that take place as part of the collaboration agreements.

To provide the Alliance with factual feedback on their role as a 'network of networks' and to assist it in identifying future courses of action, the participatory assessment built on the

⁸ Attempts were made to reach the non-respondent by telephone with no success.

⁹ There are no quantifiable means to measure or establish direct correlations between the funds provided by the Alliance and particular outcomes in the networks' performance, except for the assessments and attributions made by the Coordinators in their reporting.

intended direction and actual scope, reach and impact of the Alliance's performance in collaborating with regional and large-country networks. Throughout the consultation, the review sought to identify the value-added of the collaboration arrangements and the difference these make for individual forms of networking HPSR associations in various regions.

Section Two. Learning from Experience. Results from a Consultation Process

This section presents a synthesis of the main findings from the review that led to identifying five strategic directions and drawing recommendations relevant to an enhanced collaboration between country and regional HPSR networks and the Alliance. The synthesis builds on the self-assessment and suggestions of the networks about opportunities, processes and capacity building priorities that could benefit from further attention and a more comprehensive approach to networking and collaboration.

The views assessing past and potential opportunities for collaboration between the Alliance and the networks, which serve as a base for this report and its recommendations, were not uniform. They reflected the strengths and weaknesses of the networks consulted; their state of development, the type of relationship they had with the Alliance Secretariat as well as their own expectations.¹⁰ Except for a common interest in HPSR, there are not evident strong bonds or common denominators among these networks although they share similarities. Networks that are at a planning stage show equal diversity. Among the networks consulted, it was possible to identify areas of interest and concerns common across the board, however, it is not clear the extent to which these represent the broader "HPSR networking reality" that the Alliance aims to reach outside this specific circle of contacts.¹¹

This is both a challenge and an opportunity for the Alliance to further define and enhance its role as a "network of networks", profile the type of partners it seeks, and determine criteria to provide support. An aspect worth considering in this context and in assessing present and future collaborations between the Alliance and regional and large country networks is the broad and even ambitious scope of their respective agendas, given the human and financial resources available to them. With this in mind, this section presents a synthesis of the findings and views gathered, and offers recommendations under five strategic directions to guide future collaboration.

¹⁰ There are substantive differences in institutional profile and make-up, objectives and organization, scope and specific activities among the networks. These result from context-specific demands, original mission and goals at the time of creation before joining the Alliance, and from the broad nature of the HPSR field.

¹¹ From the information available, it is not possible to determine how many full-fledged HPSR networks actually exist worldwide and how many could be in a planning stage. The Alliance in its presentation at the workshop identified 12 "active networks in HPSR". For the workshop, the Alliance Secretariat contacted approximate 20 possible participants out of which eight attended.

2.1 Strengthening the Networks' Performance

Four out of the eight networks¹² consulted had received financial support from the Alliance ranging from USD \$15,000 – 35,000 per year. Some had also received technical support. Three of the other four networks are at a developmental stage and had little or no formal past collaboration with the Alliance. Overall, the funds allocated in the past or planned for the next two years specifically for “support to networks” represent a small portion of the Alliance’s total annual expenditures.¹³

Three of the networks that received support are regional involving several countries and institutional members, while a fourth covers one large country. One of the regional networks did not received funding from the Alliance in a recent allocation due to poor performance and is now restructuring. Of the networks that have not received any financial support and / or are at a planning stage, three are regional and one is a large country network.

The review shows that there are important differences among the networks in thematic focus and activities, geographic scope and coverage, organization and structural capacity, number of members and type of membership, funding and resources, and access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) among others. The consultation suggests that monitoring some of the intervening factors acting upon the effectiveness of a network performance need careful consideration:

- **Increase Program Focus.** The networks’ program priorities range from health economic to health reform, to public health, to health equity and health financing among others. Their thematic focus varies substantially despite an assumed common thread around HPSR. In theory, this represents an opportunity for horizontal, inter-network collaboration and comparative work. In practice, however, the HPSR program link seems more an ad-hoc attribution to the relationship that each maintains or plans to have with the Alliance than an explicitly defined program framework. In fact, in some instances a discipline is the driving force in defining a program focus. The Alliance itself covers a wide range of activities (13) and sub-activities (22).¹⁴ This responds to perceived priorities, specific local capacity building needs and demands as much as to the influence of donors, a loose approach to association between the Alliance and the networks, and the broad definition of the HPSR field itself. **Through further strategic planning and programming based on consultation, the Alliance should redefine the operational focus of the HPSR field and the activities it pursues, building on the common program strengths of collaborating networks.**

¹² The Network for Health Systems and Services Research in the Southern Cone of Latin America; the Health Economics and Policy Network in Africa (HEPNet); the China Network for Training & Research in Health Economics & Financing (CHERTN), and the Asia-Pacific Health Economics Network (APHEN).

¹³ Between the years 2000-02, the Alliance allocated an average of 8.2% of total expenditures to “support to networks”. The forecast for 2003 dropped to 7.5 %, while the 2004 budget planned estimated this support to be 12.3 % of total expenditures. No budget is planned for 2005 for this item.

¹⁴ AHPSR, December 22, 2003. “Workplan 2004-2005, Draft 3.

- **Concentrate the Scope of Activities.** The range of activities the networks and the Alliance do or plan to undertake is broad with obvious implications in terms of resources. With various emphases, the activities include research and evaluation, policy advice and advocacy, training and awards granting, publications, dissemination, institutional networking and accreditation, provision of technical expertise and fundraising and extension. Like their program focus, the range of activities responds to the sheer diversity in needs, the lack of a critical mass of HPSR researchers and institutions, the complexity of the problems, the need to break through and access funding priorities, and pressures to demonstrate results in a field where effective interventions require multi-pronged approaches. The risks involved in operating over such a wide front are many with implications on the human and financial resources of their secretariats. **The Alliance should encourage building on the comparative advantages of its partners and itself, concentrating efforts and resources on core activities, thus maximizing resources and reducing chances of duplication.**
- **Assess Coverage and Reach.** Specific regions and countries, correlate differently with factors such as institutional capacity of the networks and of their members; priority and access to funding; facilities and feasibility of networking and communications; opportunities and costs of gathering and disseminating information; access to policy-makers; impact on decision-making; and programming capacity to address demands. Two issues became apparent: (a) most of the networks consulted do not seem to have a clear capacity building strategy to include particular countries or institutions except for historical reasons related to their inception, ease of geographic reach or personal contacts; (b) the institutional coverage they have or plan to have seems to depend primarily on ad-hoc circumstances rather than on a proactive strategy of inclusion based on a systematic needs assessment and evaluation. **The geo-political context of the networks and their coverage are important considerations for the Alliance in assessing potential for collaboration, expected impact and effective use of limited resources.**
- **Reinforce Structures and Organization.** There is evidence that at least three factors play an equally critical role in networking effectiveness and potential for collaboration: institutional base and affiliation, a flexible and horizontal organization; and dynamic and proactive coordination and leadership.¹⁵ Of the networks consulted, all seems to exhibit a strong actual or potential institutional base, a capable secretariat, and workable arrangements to involve and consult their members. There are, however, differences in how formal their internal organization could be, which in turn may explain differences in decision-making flexibility and effectiveness, thus affecting their potential to associate with other networks. These also relate to the networks' institutional base (i.e. government, university, private foundation, NGO); core resources; main financial sponsors, sense of ownership among the members and time they have been in operation. However, a common characteristic among the networks, key to their functioning, is their heavy

¹⁵ See Douglas Horton et al. "Evaluating Capacity Development. Experiences from Research and Development Organizations around the World." Ottawa: ISNAR / ICTA / IDRC, 2003; Steward I. Donaldson and Michael Scriven (eds), "Evaluating Social Programs and Problems. Visions for the New Millennium." London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 2003; AHPSR, "User-Driven Health Policy and Systems Research. Workshop report and case studies. February 2004.

dependency on one person or a very small group of individuals. **Future collaborations will benefit from the Alliance taking steps to provide its networks with technical assistance and expertise in organizational networking, including access to information on best practices.**

- **Re-define a Common Ground.** Convened by the Alliance Secretariat, the networks came together under a broadly define HPSR umbrella. The diversity in their profiles and the range of their programs, however, suggest the need to identify the type of activities that given the objectives of the Alliance¹⁶ offers the best common ground with a higher potential for collaboration. This can be achieved through the identification and dissemination of “best practices” in HPSR networking and in linking research and policy; the targeted use of capacity building mechanisms; the exchange of lessons learned; and the systematic monitoring of progress. In fact, some networks see the need to identify “what works” in HPSR networking as a first step. Despite its strategic importance, little evidence was found that this type of groundwork has been carried out to strengthen the networking role of the Alliance. Looking at the actual and intended agendas of the networks, all identify, explicitly or implicitly, activities with a goal of “capacity building” around a particular program focus or more broadly around HPSR.¹⁷ Under this banner, they include, in various degrees: research, training, publication of research results, and dissemination.¹⁸ A common framework has the potential to enhance horizontal cross-regional collaboration, complement current one-to-one partnerships, help to identify synergies, and enhance a greater sense of ownership among partners. A key is to carefully identify where the interests of the Alliance and the networks meet based on their work plans. **In planning future collaborations, the Alliance is likely to maximize its impact and resources if identifies a core program around capacity building activities that could serve as common ground to establish cooperation agreements.**

2.2 Establishing Enhanced Partnerships

There is consensus among those consulted that collaborating with the Alliance has actual and potential benefits. Those who received financial support acknowledge in various degrees, that because of such collaboration the networks and, largely, their members, have benefited. They also acknowledge that the relationship brings added challenges.

¹⁶ The Strategic Framework 2003-2005 outlines the Alliance’s refined core objectives (n. 3.4) which focus directly on capacity development through specific strategies (n. 3.5)

¹⁷ Capacity building is fashionable development approach which may encompass a diverse range of actions aimed at strengthening the ability of individual and institutions as well as communities and organization to achieve their objectives and produce measurable results through the acquisition and management of knowledge, the attainment and application of skills, and the monitoring and evaluation of results.

¹⁸ There are at least five capacity-building categories relevant to knowledge production. They include: capacity to produce research; capacity to manage and administer the knowledge production process; capacity to disseminate and communicate research results and knowledge in a manner suitable to the target audience; capacity to apply and use research knowledge; and capacity to advocate and mobilize for the use of knowledge in decision-making.

Although there is no systematic measurement of impact, obvious indicators or data to assess the extent of such benefits there are common areas most likely strengthened because of the Alliance's presence and support. These include greater visibility and awareness, and access to global HPSR information. The Alliance provides the networks with contact to other organizations and to donors, helps them to become aware of priorities in HPSR, and provides them with access to documents and publications.¹⁹

The consultation shows that together with a significant concurrence in recognizing the general value of the Alliance, there are important gaps in information about the way in which the Alliance operates, the criteria it applies to select its partners, and the expectations it holds beyond the tasks-for-funding outlined in the collaboration agreements. This shows a need to address specific operational issues relevant to future collaboration. The findings suggest that attention be given to several aspects of partnership including:

- **Refine the Notion of Partnership.** To reach a wider audience, the Alliance sees all “relevant institutions interested in Alliance activities”²⁰ as its partners. Given the broadness of this approach and that of the HPSR field, practically any institution working in health research can potentially become an Alliance partner. Currently, the Alliance Internet site lists over 350 partners. According to the “Alliance Partnership Guidelines” (annex 1), networks and / or association of institutions are “*considered partners on a par with other institutions*” (emphasis added). This implies that regional and country networks like those consulted, which may bridge many institutions across several countries, are no different in their collaborating status with the Alliance than a single institution who that does comply with the Guidelines,²¹ except in some instances for the allocation of funds through a collaboration agreement.

The review revealed that this is an issue requiring immediate attention. Some of those consulted saw it as a contradiction in the interest of the Alliance to cultivate and enhance collaboration with regional and country networks. As such, they saw it as a disincentive for collaboration given the magnitude of network responsibilities compared to those of a single institution considered “on par” in status. In fact, this situation leaves room for duplication as their own members can approach the Alliance directly as institutional partners, while approaching a network secretariat that may be receiving support from the Alliance. Some also saw efficiency implications as the networks offer the Alliance opportunities to delegate functions, multiply efforts and maximize limited resources based on comparative advantages and proximity to users and beneficiaries. Some went as far as suggesting the need to clarify the “criteria for partnership” currently applied by the

¹⁹ The networks seem to see the collaboration with the Alliance as an association of mutual convenience, with the potential of facilitating access to human, financial and technical resources and, in some instances adding credibility to their mutual roles.

²⁰ Relevant institutions as per the Alliance's “Rules and Regulations,” Article 7, 1.1 “include institutions active in health policy and systems research as producers and users as well as those in funding and technical support roles.”

²¹ Annex 1 of the “Rules and Regulations” lists the requirements an institution must comply with to become a partner.

Alliance. “Why certain networks are approached and selected”, “what is the role that networks play in the context of the Alliance’s mission and objectives”, and “what role open competitions for resources should play” are some issues requiring attention.

The importance of these issues is not unknown to the Alliance itself. There is a need to differentiate between “collaborating partners”, comprising networks / associations working with the Alliance under an agreement, and “members” to include all other institutions, networks and associations that applied for general affiliation as under the current approach. In such a light and to frame future collaboration, **the Alliance should revisit its understanding of “partner” and “partnership”, modifying the Partnership Guidelines and related program directions accordingly.**

- **Streamline Collaboration Agreements.** There is accord that “collaboration agreements” serve a useful purpose to formalize specific forms of partnership. At the same time based on accounts of experiences, most felt the need for improvement. Some felt that the negotiation process in which a secretariat engages to formalize the allocation of funds is time consuming, not always clear in its objectives and often leading to compromise on the part of the networks due to their need for funds, thus bringing additional demands upon their coordination. Others felt that the agreements tend to reflect in part a donor-recipient arrangement and in part a client, “instrumental” relationship, more than horizontal collaboration.²² This last requires setting common priorities, greater awareness of each other agendas, a more effective flows and timing of communication, sharing of expectations, and a more horizontal partnership. **The Alliance should streamline the process of establishing collaboration agreements, including earlier and more agile communication exchanges and participatory planning processes.**
- **Encourage Sharing of Agendas.** Although both the Alliance and the networks seem to assume that their association is founded on shared principles around HPSR, the practical day-to-day operations of each partner show considerable diversity in purpose, interests and actions. This is perhaps most clear in the setting of the tasks included in the collaboration agreements. Although not overwhelming, there is an important concern that the collaboration agreements are not as responsive as they could be to the needs of the networks. In fact, some feel that at times the Alliance advances activities that may not be central to the networks’ own programs or critical to a specific region, thus having to deviate efforts to secure additional resources. This leads some to suggest better differentiation in the boundaries between support that furthers the agenda of a network and funds intended to pay for commissioned work. There is the view that activities in the agreements are “too rigid” and “too pre-directed” leaving little or no room for creativity of regional / local input. An additional view is that little or no information is shared between networks concerning their respective collaboration agreements with the Alliance. **The Alliance should make additional efforts to involve its collaborating networks in planning and defining its portfolio of activities and sharing information on the collaboration agreements.**

²² One issue indirectly raised by observations of some of those consulted, refers to the understanding of the core role of the Alliance and the extent that it performs “a donor role” vis-à-vis some of its partners.

- **Increase Efficiency of Administration of Agreements.** Those that received financial support recognized that it allowed them to embark on research, training and dissemination for which alternative funds may have not been available otherwise. A shared view is that collaborating with the Alliance contributes to strengthening horizontal cooperation in their environments, and allows them to take actions to develop research capacity. At the same time, honing some administrative aspects of the agreements such as the terms of the agreements, the speed of approval processes, and the duplication of efforts that may be involved could further facilitate collaboration. Year-to-year agreements are too short to match the evolution of the networks' activities and too demanding on their secretariats due to negotiations and reporting requirements. The agreements could also spell out better the TORs for the activities, identifying expected outcomes and setting up lines of technical communication and feedback. The administration of the agreements will benefit from a more speedy process to approve and release payments thus avoiding unnecessary burden on the secretariats. **The Alliance could make the administration of collaboration agreements more agile to facilitate their management by the networks and their reporting and accountability.**
- **Carry out Monitoring and Evaluation.** An aspect central to establishing future partnerships and to the current operations of the Alliance is setting up means for ongoing monitoring and evaluation. It became apparent that monitoring of progress and evaluation of performance based on results have not received sufficient attention and on an ongoing basis. When it comes to the collaboration with networks, reports on the collaboration agreements, for example, are mostly narrative and opinion-based provided by the coordination teams. There is no indication that the Alliance and / or the networks have in place assessment systems, program evaluation or feedback mechanisms *as part of* their regular program and collaboration activities. Evaluations seem to be carried out ad-hoc, every so often, as discrete initiatives and mostly in response to specific requests from management or from a sponsor, in most cases a donor. To strengthen future collaboration, **the Alliance and its partners should set in place and / or strengthen monitoring systems, and evaluation and feedback mechanisms to assist them in their strategic planning and accountability.**

2.3 Seeking Funding Sources and Inter-Cooperation

Availability and access to funding are the single most important factors affecting the operations and the sustainability of the networks and the feasibility of those at a planning stage. These factors often depend as much on limitations placed by the donors' geographic and thematic priorities as well as on the ability of the networks to seek funds and generate revenue. Although there are differences in funding opportunities among regions, countries and networks, those consulted identified the lack of core support to maintain a coordination and infrastructure as an obstacle, independently of their specific programs. They also agreed that despite the capacity building nature of the role of networks - recognized by the Alliance, governments and donor agencies alike - funds for essential mechanisms to renew the cadres of HPSR researchers and policy makers are scarce.

From a networking perspective, those consulted identified four areas in need of attention. They include: (a) core human resources and basic infrastructure to run a secretariat; (b) production of dissemination materials and publications to reach their audience; (c) support to training and skills development activities; and (c) support to building reliable information and communications platforms, including Internet access, building and maintenance of Internet sites, electronic communication, and development of data bases.

There is general agreement that the role of the Alliance in financially assisting HPSR networks is a critical contribution to their success. There are, however, issues worth considering in planning future collaboration, such as:

- **Scale-up Support.** The Alliance financial support to some networks represents a small but important contribution to their total operational funds, often filling gaps that others do not consider. All networks depend heavily on funding from international donors and in some instances national governments. On the Alliance side, the funds assigned as “support to networks” fluctuate at around 10 % of the Alliance annual expenditures, although the secretariats and / or their members may have access to Alliance funds budgeted under different items (i.e. small grants, expert consulting, etc) on a competitive basis. Support areas critical to the networks, such as “Capacity strengthening grants”, have been discontinued due to lack of funds.

The review shows that overall the scale in which networks are directly funded is small compared to other activities in the Alliance’s agenda and the expectations about the partnership by both parties (the Alliance and the networks). For the Alliance, the small scale of this type of support may have important trade-offs in terms of lower the potential accumulated impact over time, reduced influence on the networks’ HPSR agenda and sustainability, less potential cooperation from the networks, and limited potential “collective venture power” to approach donors jointly with the networks.²³ For the networks, it implies dealing with multiple donors each with specific demands, in which context the Alliance represents only a small fraction. **If the Alliance seeks to strengthen its partnership with networks, it should consider increasing the funds allocated to their support, channelling more of its activities through the networks.**

- **Target Support.** The experience shows that of the Alliance funding allocated to networks (between USD \$15,000 – 30,000 per year), in some instances approximately half may go to support core coordination activities and the rest to support activities of the Alliance carried out by the networks, with the implications mentioned earlier. It appears that this breakdown depends more on one-to-one negotiations and short-term needs than a strategic approach to collaboration. The progress reports and some opinions show that the Alliance puts demands on the networks for the funds provided dispersed across activities and objectives. Another option, depending on the role assigned to its network partners, is for **the Alliance to maximize the impact of its financial support and contribute to the**

²³ A practice often used by some donors with limited funding capacity is to target their funds as “seed money” to promote particular initiatives that can be seen by other donors as too risky to support alone or which they cannot support under their guidelines. This type of approach offers the Alliance an opportunity to play a leadership role, maximize resources and promote donors collaboration.

sustainability of networks by further targeting funds based closely on the networks' priorities.

- **Provide a Brokering Role.** Access to funding for HPSR activities is highly competitive and requires contacts, skills and expertise not always fully developed in the networks. This has wide implications. The secretariats invest valuable effort securing funding with limited bargaining power, while donors often weigh the value of investing resources directly into regional and country networks or, for example, dealing with organization such as the Alliance that play an intermediary role in channelling funds to specific activities. Two issues emerged from the review. First, given the limited amount of HPSR funding, in practice the networks (as independent entities) and the Alliance (as an umbrella organization) compete for funds in a small circle of donor agencies risking duplication and diminishing mutual opportunities. Second, due to the limited capacity of most networks to secure funds in a sustainable manner, their ability to respond to local needs and demands and their potential impact becomes restricted. They often lack the skills to meet donors' procedures and priorities, demonstrate the standards of management capacity and accountability expected, or show short-term results as often as expected by the donors. One of the advantages of horizontal, and in a way preferential, partnership between the Alliance and a select group of networks is the opportunity to build on mutual comparative advantages to maximize resources and avoid duplication. In this light, **the Alliance should systematically set in place means to assist and collaborate with networks in fund raising and exploring joint ventures, taking advantage of complementarities.**
- **Build on Delivery Mechanisms.** Scarce resources, multiple demands, and imbalances between national and local level priorities and those set internationally, add pressure to organizations like the Alliance and its partners to identify mechanisms that work in support of HPSR capacity building needs on the ground. The experience of networks working in diverse activities shows a risk of dispersing efforts and not building on core competencies. Pressures to focus on the short-term impede targeting on capacity building solutions with the greatest and most cost-effective potential impact over the longer-term. Such pressures also limit the potential to look creatively beyond their boundaries and see the advantages of comparative collaborative work. From the perspective of networks, three types of support / delivery mechanisms require careful consideration: (a) Core coordination grants to ensure a network management and administration capacity over 2-3 years periods. (b) Outcome-based project support for the development and / or maintenance of dissemination capacity with an emphasis on ICTs development and use; and (c) targeted program support for capacity building using schemes such as small grants, awards to young researchers, training workshops, and distance learning managed by the networks. **The Alliance should favour supporting capacity building mechanisms with the greatest multiplier effect potential over reasonable periods, to ensure the sustainability of basic network operations.**
- **Facilitate Sustainability.** Central to achieving the full potential of a successful cooperation between the Alliance and the networks is working towards facilitating their sustainability as agents with the greater multiplying capacity to promote the generation,

dissemination and use of HPSR knowledge. Contributing to building the capacity of networks to develop and implement innovative and proactive plans to generate additional resources is directly relevant to the long-term impact of the Alliance. Helping to build the organizational and negotiating capacity of the secretariats is also in direct mutual benefit in terms of sustainability.²⁴ To enhance the potential of future cooperation with key networks **the Alliance should facilitate building the core management and negotiating capacity of the secretariats to seek additional funding and expand their sustainability options.**

2.4 Enhancing Networking and Communication

Effective communication and networking are instrumental dimensions of the Alliance purpose. They involve two related elements: first, a capacity to develop agile feedback mechanisms to ease consultation and maintain an ongoing exchange of information among parties, and second, specific systems and tools to assist in these processes, reach the intended audience, and engage in consultative and participatory decision-making. The review indicates that both elements are central to present and future collaboration.

Steps taken in 2003 to refine the Alliance aim, and focus its objectives reaffirmed the importance of concentrating efforts on areas where there are greater needs, building on comparative advantages, and exploiting the greater multiplying effect potential. Most of those consulted agreed that among all the roles the Alliance plays,²⁵ promoting and providing HPSR actors “a space” that enables interactions and fosters communication and networking has the most potential to fill a critical gap vis-à-vis the international HPSR community. This suggests that the role of serving as a “network or networks” is perceived by these partners as a core role of the Alliance around which other complementary functions could take place. Some perceive that this role as a “secretariat of a global body of HPSR networks” has the greater potential of success and positive impact in developmental terms over the long run.

The review indicates that making this possible must begin by ensuring fluid and timely communication among the networks and the Alliance on a regular basis. There is recognition that achieving this depends on various factors ranging from cost effective access to reliable technology to sufficient human resources to respond to a heavy demand, particularly in the context of the Secretariats.

²⁴ The global character of the Alliance, its affiliation with WHO, its relationships with donor agencies and its capacity to disseminate information globally represent the value added from the perspective of the networks to approach donors and international organizations in a horizontal collaboration framework.

²⁵ The Alliance identifies six strategies to implement its objectives. These include: (a) Monitoring and publicizing the global progress of HPSR. (b) Synthesizing, disseminating and funding research on priority areas. (c) Encouraging the attainment of a critical mass of researchers in the field of HPSR. (d) Promoting policy relevant research and evidence-based decision making, including approaches which achieve effective interaction between key actors. (e) Ensuring widespread access to HPSR knowledge through effective communications strategies, and (f) monitoring and evaluating progress in the Alliance partnership and secretariat.

Concerning the second dimension, the review shows that since its inception, the Alliance has made considerable progress setting up a technology-based communication / dissemination platform. This, and a range of activities involving the collection and propagation of critical HPSR information,²⁶ provide those in the field with access to databases, publications and tools; profile HPSR actors that become affiliated to the Alliance; promote a forum to exchange information, and provide bridges to other relevant sites. The effectiveness of these systems in reaching the intended audience and having the expected effect depends greatly on the awareness and the capacity to access and use such a wealth of information.

The review revealed that contrary to what was expected, the apparent level of use of such facilities by those consulted is low, although generally they seem to be aware of their existence. This raises a question regarding the need to examine further how much the institution members of these networks use the Alliance web facilities. This may have important implications for the role that networks can play in assisting and complementing the Alliance networking efforts. These findings suggest considering various factors:

- **Reinforce Communication Capacities and Feedback.** Any future arrangement to build on the relationships between the Alliance and the networks will require enhancing the flow of communication with their secretariats ensuring a responsive stream of information, consultation and feedback. Some indicated that feedback on a regular basis is, in some instances, difficult to get and not as fluid as it could be between the networks and the Alliance, and between the networks and their members. Some highlighted for example, delays in reaction time, incomplete information exchanges and a lack of a fluid feedback loop around specific tasks. Constraints in time and resources on the networks and the Alliance secretariat explain some shortcomings. Facilitating inter-network communication could be an opportunity for the Alliance to strengthen its own role. However, this may require additional dedicated resources as well as a prospective view towards partnerships. Addressing these aspects is critical in an enhanced role of the Alliance with the networks. **The Alliance should take steps to further improve the exchange of information, consultation and feedback with the networks.**
- **Strengthen Networking Capacity using Internet.** Despite the progress and efforts made to date, the review shows that there is an important “technology gap” among the networks, and between these and their members. A current impediment to more effective networking is insufficient access to communication technologies and Internet resources. Although this varies according to regions, countries and institutions, it is a key effectiveness and performance factor for the networks in reaching an intended audience. It is also a factor in any attempt by the Alliance to play a more proactive role as a ‘network of networks.’ Experiences from other agencies show that this is not an isolate case. The potential technological capacity available to enhance networking activities greatly exceeds the competence to fully use available tools or the means to access them. Strengthening the technical communication and networking capacity of networks is central to their active

²⁶ The activities listed by the Alliance as part of its agenda are multiple, including monitoring and publicizing HPSR, research on priority areas, developing a critical mass of researchers, developing tools, producing syntheses, publishing, networking and assessing capacities, evaluating performance, and fundraising among others.

involvement as partners of the Alliance. This could involve a range of options from facilitating the training of core staff, to assisting networks in developing and maintaining their Internet sites. **The Alliance should consider taking actions to strengthen the technical networking and Internet capacity of its network partners, as a complement to providing core support to their secretariats.**

- **Enhance Virtual Interaction and Usage.** The progress made by the Alliance in developing a modern Internet platform is a critical step in consolidating its service role to the HPSR global community. Those consulted recognize this as such. At the same time, their level of awareness about the content and the potential of the site are low, and apparently, many rarely used it.²⁷ Except for knowing that the Alliance site has documents, some generic tools and the profile of HPSR institutions, including their own (some of which are over a year out of date), there was no indication about how these networks use the alliance site and what specific and distinct benefits they draw from it. **The Alliance future collaboration with networks will benefit from setting in place the means to actively promote and track the use of its Internet site facilities ensuring it is responsive to the needs of partners.**

2.5 Exploring Future Prospects and Opportunities

There is a shared view of general satisfaction among those consulted regarding the Alliance's efforts to strengthen collaboration with regional and large country networks and its willingness to explore alternative approaches to those used in the past in achieving this goal more effectively. The Alliance as a global initiative and its close work with networks that represent an important HPSR constituency, make a critical contribution to building up research to policy links in health system research.

The past three years represented a natural growing period for the Alliance as well as an opportunity to build a base of trust with selected HPSR networks. The model applied to establishing these relationships was multifaceted given the traits of the partners. Perhaps because of the necessity of a trial period the strength was a one-to-one and rather a vertical relationship. As indicated, some see this interaction as beneficial but instrumental, and in many aspects no different from the relation they could maintain with any donor. The areas for improvement are multiple from improving communications, making the relationship more consultative and participatory and thereby opening windows for horizontal collaboration, to covering a more representative number of HPSR networks, to finding instruments and approaches that build on mutual strengths and advantages. All coincide in viewing the Alliance a source of yet untapped potential for breaking barriers, learning from experiences across regions, and building a coalition of key HPSR players to advance shared goals in a highly competitive global HPSR environment.

There is a disposition among the networks and the Alliance to explore the next steps in this ongoing collaboration. This implies looking at more innovative and dynamic arrangements of

²⁷ At the time of the consultation workshop, the Alliance presented information about its web site including its databases and search tools.

association, with a boldly defined shared purpose, and with a revitalized approach to teamwork. Taking these steps implies considering the following:

- **Establish a Consortium of Networks.** An option that emerged in the consultation is to explore the feasibility of a Consortium of HPSR networks under the institutional umbrella of the Alliance. Its purpose would be to strengthen horizontal collaboration in promoting the generation, dissemination and use of knowledge for enhancing health systems performance. *Under a new notion of partnership*, this Consortium will bring together a number of HPSR networks around common objectives as direct partners and main representatives of the Alliance in their respective regional or national environments. The Consortium will oversee and represent in front of donors and the Alliance Board a framework of *shared priorities identified by its members*²⁸ to address at least three areas of concern: (a) Assist the networks in approaching donors to promote and negotiate support for specific capacities that offer comparative advantages to the donors' priorities. (b) Promote, support and monitor the commissioning and undertaking of comparative research, training and cross fertilization activities between networks, and (c) provide and facilitate access to technical assistance and expertise to the networks in capacity building, including organization capacity to the networks' secretariats. Over the next year, **the Alliance should convene a Task Force to develop a viable Consortium model. The Task Force will identify and consult with potential members of the Consortium worldwide, explore interests and potential support of donors, and draw an association model and tentative plan of action.**
- **Maintain Transitional Support.** The networks supported by the Alliance count on the continuation of funding as a central contribution to their sustainability. Some of the networks not yet operational, but invited to participate in the consultation, see in the Alliance a unique opportunity to compete for basic support that will allow them to establish a secretariat and a plan of activities, and perhaps approach other donors. Continuation of this type of support *under a new notion of partnership* and with a more targeted and responsive approach is a necessity to ensuring the existence of key networks in strategic regions that could collaborate with the Alliance and enhance its reach and impact. To achieve this end, **the Alliance will take steps to maintain funding to key networks on a transitional base as required until a new partnership structure is in place as reflected in a Consortium.**
- **Revisit Criteria for Allocation of Resources.** Key to redefining the Alliance's approach to partnership with regional and country networks is the need to maximize resources and potential reach and impact and to avoid duplications and overlap with and among its partners. For the Alliance, this implies re-valuing the strategic importance of networks to carry out its mission, including a greater delegation and decentralization of activities, greater consultation on priorities, and greater focus on mutual core competencies. This involves, first, re-assessing which program activities are more effectively carried out directly under the coordination of the Alliance and which can be "outsourced" to the

²⁸ Under such an arrangement, each network will still maintain its independence and discretion to determine and manage a program of work that responds to its own constituency. For those activities that are network specific, it will seek funding independently.

networks; and second, adapting its budget allocations accordingly. As an integral step to revisiting its notion of partnership and promoting the creation of a Consortium of networks, **the Alliance should examine its criteria and practice for budget allocation and delegation of responsibilities in such a manner that these strengthen future work with networks.**

Section Three. Strategic Plan for Short-term Collaboration

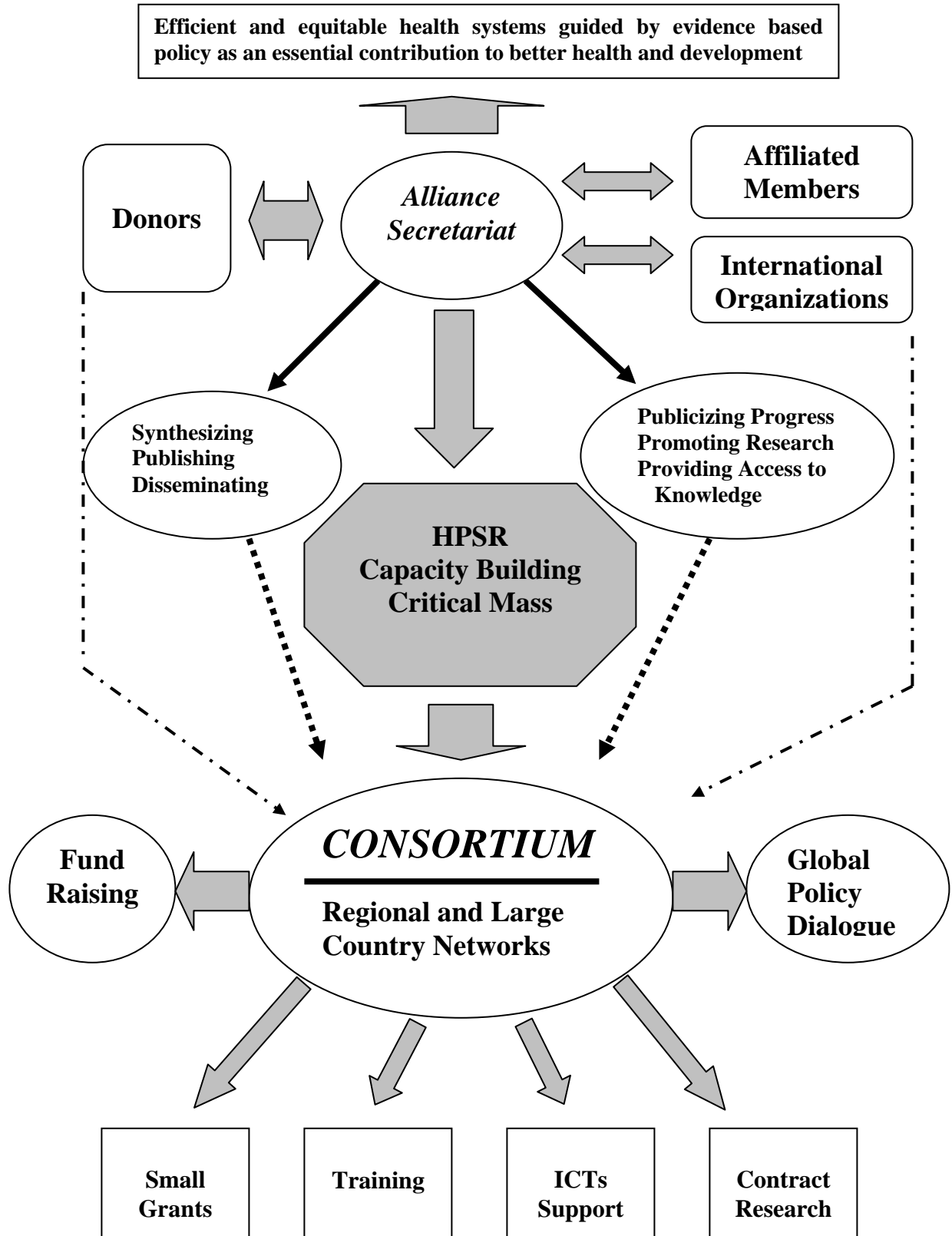
This section articulates the findings and recommendation emerging from the consultation and the review of past associations with regional and large country networks around a strategic plan for short-term collaboration. The timeline for the implementation of this plan is 3 years.

The proposed plan is rooted in strategic planning principles as an articulation of efforts and decisions that translate into specific actions to shape and guide the achievements of the organization's objectives and the fulfilment of its mission. As such, the plan is conceived as a participatory and partner-focused process that requires monitoring and evaluation as part of its implementation.

The plan assumes that there is a deliberate effort by the Alliance and its partners to enhance collaboration practices, mechanisms and systems to achieve common goals. It also assumes that of all the objectives, strategies and activities carried out by the Alliance, there will be an effort to identify those with the greatest potential to strengthen networking which offer all parties comparative advantage and multiplier potential. With this in mind, the plan builds on five strategic directions and twenty-one recommendations identified through the assessment and consultation process commissioned by the Alliance.

Considering the current planning timeline in its Strategic Framework 2003-2005, this three-years plan offers the Alliance a bridge between the completion of currently planned activities and a new framework for a next triennium. It also considers the possibility of the Alliance "graduating" from the Global Forum as a fully fleshed-out initiative operating more closely with a selected number of HPSR networks under a re-defined partnership approach that focuses more closely on HPSR capacity building as reflected by the following Enhanced Approach to Collaboration Model:

Enhanced Approach to Collaboration Model



3.1 The Operational Framework

Building on lessons from past collaboration with networks and considering the recommendations from the review and consultation process, this section outlines the current operating framework articulating the Alliance’s priorities. This framework serves as a point of departure for the implementation of five strategic directions relevant to the enhanced approach to collaboration with HPSR networks and a revitalized notion of partnership framed within the Alliance goals, objectives and strategies presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The Alliance Strategic Framework

<p>AHPSR Central Problem</p> <p><i>Insufficient use of knowledge for enhancing health systems performance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A gross lack of information on the performance of health systems and on how policies affect performance • Even when knowledge is available, it is not necessarily known to or used by policy makers
<p>AHPSR Vision</p> <p><i>Efficient and equitable health systems guided by evidence based policy as an essential contribution to better health and development</i></p>

Goal	Objectives	Values	Strategies
<p>To promote the generation, dissemination and use of knowledge for enhancing health system performance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stimulate the generation and synthesis of knowledge, encompassing evidence, tools and methods • Facilitate the development of capacity for the generation, dissemination and use of knowledge among researchers, policymakers and other stakeholders • Promote the dissemination and use of knowledge to improve the performance of health systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency in its governance • Effective governance, accountable to its Partners • Autonomy in its operation • Sensitivity to gender, language, diversity of disciplines, differential needs and policies of related sectors, and to their implications for its mode of work • Ensuring added value through building on and complementing the work of other agencies • Ensuring special attention to low income countries and pro-poor health system development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring and publicizing the global progress of HPSR • Synthesizing, disseminating and funding research on priority areas • Encouraging the attainment of a critical mass of researchers in HPSR • Promoting policy relevant research and evidence-based decision-making including approaches which achieve effective interaction between key actors • Ensuring widespread access to HPSR knowledge through effective communications strategies • Monitoring and evaluating progress in the Alliance partnership and secretariat

3.2 Strategic Directions

Using this framework as a point of departure to the development and implementation of an enhanced approach to collaboration, the proposed strategic directions are intended to nourish the organization's strategic planning process. In so doing it will re-orient the emphasis of its portfolio of activities toward achieving a maximum impact by working more closely with regional and large country networks focusing on core capacity building activities required by the networks' members, users and beneficiaries.

It is expected that this approach will contribute to optimizing financial and human resource investments by placing the collaboration with HPSR networks at the centre of the Alliance activities. The focal point is on activities where the Alliance may bring the greatest added value to working with its partners, assuming that other actions the Alliance may pursue in its global program of work will harmonize with those proposed in this document.

These strategic directions and activities blend two complementary streams to enhance the collaboration with and among networks:

- The maintenance of *more targeted* support to key network partners *on a transitional basis* to achieve a greater focus on capacity building, and
- the systematic exploration of and support to the formation a Consortium of HPSR networks under a renewed notion of partnership and as a key arm of the Alliance's future role.

Table 2 presents the relationships between the strategic directions identified in the consultation, recommended actions to consider by the Alliance and its partners, and the potential outcomes that could be realistically expected. Each strategic direction offers a menu of possible actions for its implementation. These, in turn, are mutually complementary around specific outcomes.

Table 2. Strategic Directions, Actions and Outcomes

Strategic Directions	Action / Recommendations	Main Expected Outcome
<p>1. Strengthening the Networks' Performance</p>	<p>1.1 Redefine the operational focus of the HPSR field and the activities pursued, building on common program strengths of the collaborating networks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased program focus • Common ground established
	<p>1.2 Build on comparative advantages, concentrating efforts and resources on core activities, thus maximizing efforts and resources and reducing the chances of duplication.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased program focus • Efforts and resources maximized • Duplication avoided
	<p>1.3 Assess the potential for collaboration, impact and effective use of limited resources by considering the context of the networks and their coverage.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced collaboration • Greater responsiveness • Better reach
	<p>1.4 Provide the networks with technical assistance and expertise in organizational networking, including access to information on best practices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced collaboration • Improved network management and accountability • Reinforced structure and organization
	<p>1.5 Identify a core program around capacity building activities that could serve as common ground to establishing cooperation agreements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common ground established • Impact and resources maximized • Capacity building strengthened • Collaboration agreements improved

Table 2. Strategic Directions, Actions and Outcomes (Cont.)

Strategic Directions	Action / Recommendations	Main Expected Outcome
<p>2. Establishing Enhanced Partnerships</p>	<p>2.1 Revisit understandings of “partner” and “partnership” modifying the Partnership Guidelines and related program directions accordingly.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-defined notion of partnership • Modified Partnership Guidelines • Shift in emphasis of program directions
	<p>2.2 Streamline the process of establishing collaboration agreements, to include earlier and more agile communication exchanges and participatory planning processes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration agreements improved • Communication among partners improved • Planning process more participatory
	<p>2.3 Involve collaborating networks more closely in planning and defining the Alliance portfolio of activities, sharing information on the collaboration agreements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared planning information • Greater transparency of collaboration agreements • Planning process more participatory
	<p>2.4 Improve the administration of collaboration agreements making them more agile to facilitate their management by the secretariats, as well as reporting and accountability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved administration efficiency of agreements • Improved reporting and accountability
	<p>2.5 Set in place and / or strengthen monitoring systems, and evaluation and feedback mechanisms to assist networks in their strategic planning and accountability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring and evaluation introduced as a standard practice in collaboration activities • Improved feedback mechanisms • Improved strategic planning • Enhanced accountability

Table 2. Strategic Directions, Actions and Outcomes (Cont.)

Strategic Directions	Actions / Recommendations	Main Expected Outcomes
<p>3. Seeking Funding Sources and Inter-Cooperation</p>	<p>3.1 Scale-up support to networks by increasing the funds allocated and by channelling more activities through the networks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased core funding for networks • Greater focus on budget allocations • Improved use of networks' capabilities • Greater reach of users and beneficiaries
	<p>3.2 Maximize potential impact of financial support and contribute to the sustainability of networks by targeting funds more closely to their priorities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased responsiveness to networks' priorities • Increase potential sustainability of networks • Increased potential impact of financial resources
	<p>3.3 Set in place means to assist networks in fund rising, exploring joint ventures taking advantage of complementaries.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brokering services provided to networks • Collaborative fundraising plan developed • Increased potential sustainability of networks • Negotiating capacity of networks enhanced
	<p>3.4 Favour supporting capacity building mechanisms with the greatest multiplier effect potential over reasonable periods, to ensure the sustainability of networks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater focus on capacity building • Enhanced multiplier effect of the Alliance activities • Longer-term support to networks
	<p>3.5 Facilitate building core management and negotiating capacity of the secretariats to seek additional funding and expand the sustainability of networks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased potential sustainability of networks • Core management of networks strengthened • Negotiating capacity of networks enhanced

Table 2. Strategic Directions, Actions and Outcomes (Cont.)

Strategic Directions	Actions / Recommendations	Main Expected Outcomes
<p>4. Enhancing Networking and Communication</p>	<p>4.1 Further improve the flow and exchange of information and the consultation and feedback with networks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinforced communications capacities • Improved feedback and consultation • Greater exchange of information • Enhanced vertical and horizontal communication
	<p>4.2 Strengthen the technical networking and Internet capacity of networks' secretariats.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased capacity and use of Internet facilities • Improved technical networking capacity • Strengthen capacity of secretariats • Improved reach of networks
	<p>4.3 Set in place means to actively promote and track the use of the Alliance's Internet site facilities and ensure its responsiveness to the needs of networks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved use of the Alliance Internet facilities • Improved monitoring of use of the Alliance Internet facilities • Improved use of the Internet site as a tool available to the networks.

Table 2. Strategic Directions, Actions and Outcomes (Cont.)

Strategic Directions	Actions / Recommendations	Main Expected Outcomes
5. Exploring Future Prospects and Opportunities	5.1 Convene a Task Force to identify and consult potential members of the Consortium worldwide, explore interests and potential support of donors, and draw an operational association model and tentative plan of action.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task Force convened • Mapping of potential partners completed • Viable Consortium model and plan of action developed • Interest and potential support among donors identified
	5.2 Maintain funding to key networks on a transitional base until a new partnership structure is in place, reflected in a Consortium.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key networks received transitional core support • Sustainability of key networks enhanced • Role of Task Force facilitated
	5.3 Re-examine the criteria and practice for budget allocation and delegation of responsibilities in such a manner that these strengthen the work with networks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised criteria for allocation of funds • Increased targeting on priorities • Greater delegation to network partners • Networks' capacity strengthened

3.3 Means and Approach

Implementing the strategic directions for a renewed approach to collaboration would imply that the Alliance Secretariat takes the lead in following-up on two complementary sets of activities, and adapts resources and support functions accordingly. The aim is to maintain more targeted support to key network partners on a transitional basis, while systematically exploring the viability of establishing a Consortium of HPSR networks.

The general means and approach suggested in Table 3 emerge from an analysis of the information gathered in the consultation and specific suggestions made by the participants. In some instances, these will require incorporating new steps to complement the Alliance work plans for 2004 and 2005. In others, they will require shifting the direction and / or emphasis of planned activities to reach a goal of enhanced collaboration under a renewed notion of partnership.

Table 3. General Means and Approach

Strategic Directions	Approach	
	Core Transitional Support Activities	Development of a Consortium
Strengthening the Networks' Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Criteria for transitional core support competition developed in consultation with key partners Competition and selection of networks eligible for core capacity building support carried out Work plans prepared and submitted by networks Support provided to the networks selected, targeted for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff coordination support Management of small grants Training workshops and materials Core areas of organizational capacity supported through dissemination of material, distance learning, and commissioned workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informal consultation among key partners to compile candidates for a 4-5 member international Task Force to assess and propose a Consortium of Networks model Development of the Task Force mandate and terms of reference Preparation of input and support for the Task Force
Establishing Enhanced Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notion of partnership related systems and mechanisms re-defined Collaborative administrative procedures simplified Comprehensive monitoring and evaluation plan developed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appointment of the Task Force In-depth consultation by the Task Force of partners, donors and international organizations
Seeking Funding Sources and Inter-Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities for the undertaking of joint ventures identified Business plan development training provided to networks Donors priorities and modus operandi mapped and disseminated among partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of a Consortium of Networks model, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structure and organization Reporting and accountability Core functions Business plan and Funding options Operations and membership Program of work
Enhancing Networking and Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical support package for enhancement of internet site development and maintenance developed and delivered according to needs of selected networks Consultation and feedback process designed and publicized among partners 	
Exploring Future Prospects and Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification and profiling of HPSR networks in target regions commissioned and delivered as input to the Consortium Task Force Profiling of key international consortia and "networks of networks" (Alliances) and delivered as an input to the Consortium Task Force 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery of Task Force report to the AHPSR Board

3.4 Benefits and Risks

Enhanced collaboration is likely to result in measurable benefits over the medium-term. The Alliance will benefit from a closer interaction with select networks, expanding its reach and impact. This approach will give the Alliance direct access to the capacity of networks to reach HPSR researchers, policy-makers and practitioners. The Alliance global program will benefit from bringing its institutional message closer to the intended users and beneficiaries of HPSR knowledge through building on mutual competences with its partners.

By cooperating and sharing some of the networks' capabilities, the Alliance will maximize its own human, technical and financial resources, as well as benefit from strategic information generated by the networks about their environments. By delegating tasks and responsibilities to some of the secretariats, it will free resources to strengthen its global role. By proactively cooperating and undertaking joint initiatives the Alliance will strengthen its own negotiating capacity to participate as a global broker in the HPSR field. In this light, essential to the success of a renewed approach to collaboration is the investment of efforts and resources to develop the new approach over a transition period. This will require regular consultations, greater direct involvement of partners in decision-making, decisive action on the part of the Alliance management, and access to targeted resources by reallocating funds.

Three major areas of potential risk require attention. They include obstacles to developing a sense of ownership of the new approach to collaboration among the Alliance Secretariat and Board, key networks, and main sponsors; failure in actively engaging the members of the Alliance to cooperate with the Task Force; and inability to building flexible funding mechanisms with the cooperation of donors.

It is estimated that allocation of funds in the current fiscal year budget, and in the estimated budget for 2005, will need to be complemented by additional funds in the proximity of half a million US dollars distributed over the next three years. This will permit the Alliance to provide a selected number of networks with core support for a transition period, explore the viability of the Consortium, and make available seed money to attract additional funds.

3.5 Monitoring and Evaluation

Complementary to this proposal is the need to develop and set in place a monitoring system and a program evaluation mechanism to track and assess progress on an ongoing basis. All activities carried out as part of the implementation of the new approach, up to the establishment of the Consortium, will be monitored based on measurable indicators. The results of this process will complement the report of the Task Force providing an additional base to the Board for decision-making.

Giving a greater emphasis to monitoring and evaluating collaboration arrangements under this three years plan will require taking specific steps. These include assessing collaboration arrangements as an integral part of the overall evaluation plan of the Alliance, reforming the approach and means of reporting progress, developing indicators to monitor collaboration, and developing a time table for evaluation reporting and feedback from the Alliance.

Acronyms

AHPSR	Alliance for Health Policy & Systems Research
APHEN	Asia-Pacific Health Economics Network
CHERTN	China Network for Training & Research in Health Economics & Financing
EMHR	East Mediterranean Health Research Forum
HEPnet	Health Economics and Policy Network in Africa
HPSR	Health Policy and Systems Research
ICTs	Information and Communication Technologies
SDP	Social Development & Policy Group Ltd
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (Analysis)
TORs	Terms of Reference
WHO	World Health Organization

Annex 1. Terms of Reference

Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research Assessment of Support to Networks and Future Prospects Terms of Reference for Consultant April 20, 2004

1. Background

Since 2001 the Alliance has supported four regional/large country HPSR networks to strengthen networking capacity and support Alliance activities. These were the Sub-Saharan Health Policy and Economics Network (HEPNet), the South Cone Health Systems Research Network (RED), the China Health Economics Research and training Network (CHERTN), and the Asia Pacific Health Economics Network (APHEN).

Agreements with the collaborating networks were of a variable amount, at between USD 15,000 and USD 35,000 per year. All networks in the three years were funded to engage the equivalent of a one full time professional (75% in the case of HEPNet) in support of network activities and to support in the implementation of Alliance activities through the network.

The four collaborating networks were funded on the basis of a competition in 2001. In the second year of the collaboration the four agreements were renewed. For the third year only three agreements were renewed and APHEN was dropped due to poor performance.

The annual assessments have revealed that agreements play a useful role to support networks and the Alliance. Networks secretariats have been strengthened, their own agendas supported and their global networking improved. For the Alliance, agreements have proved useful in establishing a full program of work, including activities such as the publication of network newsletters and Web sites, assessment of capacity and priorities, and organization of conferences, workshops and meetings funded by the Alliance and other donors.

The Alliance Board mandated the undertaking of an assessment of performance of the agreements throughout the three years, to learn from past experience and to identify ways of improving mutual support. The Board also mandated the renewal of networks support on the basis of this assessment as well as of a wider consultation among other regional and large country networks. Renewal should be based on an open and competitive call to be undertaken prior to the end of the current agreements later this year.

Objectives

The consultant, with the support of the Alliance secretariat, will:

- a) Identify issues and lessons for the Alliance and for networks derived from the collaboration agreements in the past three years.
- b) Produce a strategic plan for short-term collaboration between the Alliance and regional networks, assessing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of different options.

Methods

Three issues should be recognized when assessing the needs, experience and expectations of networks that have been partially and minimally funded by the Alliance and that may be interested in continuing with such support. How to assess performance of the agreement without exposing networks to an unacceptable burden? How to attribute the benefits of the agreement, given it was only a part of a wider set of inputs? How to promote the reporting of unsuccessful performance, thus enhancing the capacity to learn from the exercise?

The first issues may be addressed through two complementary approaches:

- a) A "classic" approach that assesses the performance of the agreement inside the Project in terms of achievement of objectives and Work plan development (inputs /outputs). In particular, exploration of the perceptions of the networks of the value of Alliance support, and how it might work better – what changes might they like to see in terms of total funding; types of funding, requested activities etc.
- b) A more "qualitative" approach that assesses the performance of the agreement *outside* the Project, analyzing the network productivity in terms of:
 - institutions and researchers involved in networking
 - a balanced coverage in the country and region
 - dissemination of network activities to the different health sector spheres and levels
 - real (or potential) impact of the network on local/ national/ regional health sector priorities (micro, meso, macro level; i.e., teams; institutions, policies).

For the "classic" approach the basis for the assessment of the agreement performance would be networking reports, documents, meetings/ workshops position papers, products, etc. as described in the Project Work plan and identifying other sources of support.

In the second case, networks would be invited to participate on a voluntary basis and each coordinator would be asked to prepare a report (as short, simple and precise as possible) including the following additional information:

- characteristics of researchers involved (academic degrees, specialties, place of work position, type of relationship with the network).
- principal institutions involved in networking activities (importance for improving health sector development on the country/ region; type of relationship with the network; main research line and activity).
- principal policy makers of the country/ region reached by or involved in networking (institution, position, type of relationship).
- mechanism / channels selected to disseminate network activities in the country/ region.
- impact of the network activities (brief critical description, pointing out internal and external advantages / constraints found, regarding the country / region *health research culture* and the network *choices*).

In order to promote the reporting of unsuccessful performance and limitations personal contact would be sought with coordinators for critical qualitative interchanges. Network coordinators would be considered as "highly qualified informers" for detecting and discussing networking limitations on their countries / regions, and to propose ways for helping the actual and future Alliance-supported networks to overcome them. The assessment would propose the development of a broader and shared space to work together to derive mutual lessons from the assessment process.

Lessons would provide critical inputs to "discover" and "untie" eventual "blocking knots" on the networking process. The assessment should recognize the limitations of research in developing countries, such as the gap between researchers and policy-makers, lack of resources, political and funding uncertainty, network management problems, lack of technical / administrative support, incorrect budget definitions, etc.

2. Activities and Time Line

Three broad sets of activities are considered following the proposed objectives:

A. Assessment of collaborating network performance in the past three years. The Alliance with the support of a consultant expert in network evaluation will proceed with the following activities:

- a) Review of network activities and products related to the agreement as per the existing documentation.

- b) A series of telephone interviews to clarify and go further in depth into the various activities and their achievements (depending on the willingness to participate in an "out of the agreement" assessment).
- c) Preparation of a discussion framework to identify common network strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis).
- d) A one day, facilitated meeting on May 26 where network representatives would summarize their achievements and where the SWOT analysis would be presented for discussion by the consultant.

B. Consultation of a wider number of networks on their experience, needs and expectations

The Alliance in collaboration with the same consultant will engage, in parallel, between 3 and 6 additional networks currently working in HPSR at regional level. This will proceed with the following activities:

- a) Review of network literature and documentation.
- b) Telephone consultation to clarify issues and to agree on an agenda for discussion.

A two day, facilitated meeting immediately after the meeting on d) above, on May 27 and 28 where issues will be discussed and options for inter-network and Alliance collaboration will be agreed. The meeting will cover general issues on strengths and weaknesses of networks; what they are useful for, as well as specially how Alliance can help. For example, one issue might be small grants programmes – are these a good thing for networks to do?

C. Drafting of a strategic plan for short/term collaboration with regional networks.

Based on A. and B. above and in collaboration with the Alliance secretariat, the consultant will produce a draft plan identifying possible approaches, strategies, benefits, risks and costs. A set of options may be considered if deliberation by the Alliance Board is considered appropriate on specific choices.

Annex 2. Consultation Survey

Collaboration between Regional Networks for Health Policy and Systems Research and the Alliance

Dear Colleague,

It was a pleasure to meet you at the Alliance Consultation Workshop in Geneva. This productive gathering gave participants an opportunity to exchange information, identify best practices and think about the future.

Now, I am following-up on what we began at the workshop. My interest is to gather further information on the initiative under your leadership. I am asking you for some additional details about both the current state of the network and its future plans.

Your response will be kept strictly confidential. Any information you provide me will be highly valuable for setting-up the background from which I will recommend a strategic work plan for future collaboration between HPSR Networks and the Alliance.

The objective of the exercise that I am carrying out at the request of the Alliance is twofold. First, it seeks to identify issues and lessons resulting from the collaboration between the Networks and the Alliance in the past three years. Second, it looks forward to producing a strategic plan for short-term collaboration based on the individual and collective capacity of the collaborating members. In such a context, this exercise provides you with an excellent opportunity to have an input into the future direction of the Alliance as a Network of Networks.

I will appreciate receiving your response no later than **June 15, 2004**.

Thank you in advance for your full co-operation. I look forward to hearing from you.

With best regards

Daniel Morales-Gomez Ph.D.
Director
SDP-Social Development & Policy Group Ltd.
E-mail: dmorales@magma.ca
Telephone: 613-836-5362

Consultation Survey

Instructions

The purpose of the questions below is to gather your candid opinions concerning past, current and / or possibly future collaboration between the network under your leadership and the Alliance for HPSR. In responding to the open-ended items that follow, please:

- Provide as much information as you consider relevant to properly reflect your experience, and the achievements and needs of the current (or potential) network under your coordination
- Be creative in recommending options and innovations that could be further explored by the Alliance and its partners
- Feel free to complement your response with additional documentation that you feel is relevant to the purpose of the exercise
- Send you response to dmorales@magma.ca **no later than June 15, 2004**

Please respond to the following:

1. Identify the factors of your formal and / or informal collaboration with the Alliance to date, that have assisted you in achieving the objectives of the network, and which should be retained or strengthened in future collaboration agreements. Please explain.
2. What aspects / areas of such collaboration require improvement and need to be addressed by the Alliance to advance its partnerships with HPSR networks? Please explain.
3. What, in your view, are the priorities the Alliance should pursue in its future work-plan to strengthen HPSR capacity in your region. Please elaborate.
4. What practices, mechanisms and / or forms of support would you recommend the Alliance consider as a means of improving HPSR in relation to:
 - a) Research Capacity building
 - b) Reach of Policy-makers
 - c) Training
 - d) Dissemination of information / knowledge / research results
 - e) Communication with your members
 - f) Impact on Policy
5. Given your experience to date, what specific type(s) of support could the Alliance provide to you to strengthen your role as network Coordinator?
6. What are the current sources of support for your network (including the Alliance)? Please provide approximate figures per source (i.e. donor, government, etc.); indicate type of support (i.e. funds, services, in kind, administration, space, etc.) and requirements if any (i.e. tasks to be accomplished, services to be provided, limitations on spending, etc).
7. Information and communication technologies (ICTs), including Internet-based tools, are key assets to networking. Please elaborate on the strengths and weaknesses of the network in this area, and suggest options by which future collaboration with the Alliance could enhance the network's capacity in this regard.
8. What are the current strengths and weaknesses of the network under your leadership? Please explain
9. What approaches / mechanism would you recommend the Alliance set in place to facilitate
 - a) Closer collaboration between your network and the Alliance
 - b) Greater input into the Alliance decision making process
 - c) Better communication between the Alliance management and the networks
 - d) Closer horizontal collaboration among networks associated with the Alliance
 - e) Effective forms of partnerships between your network, the Alliance and potential donors
10. What approaches and / or activities currently undertaken by the Alliance should receive less attention as a means to a more focused approach and to maximize existing limited resources?
11. What are the benefits you perceive resulting from your collaboration with the Alliance in addition to those that are financial in nature? Please explain
12. Are there specific activities and / or outcomes all networks collaborating with the Alliance should be expected to perform / achieve? Please explain.
13. Please complete the information requested in the Power Point Slide "Progress / Planning Information 1"
14. Please complete the information requested in the Power Point Slide "Progress / Planning Information 2"

15. What are the goals / objectives of your network for the next three years, and what do you perceive as obstacles to achieving them?
16. In your opinion, is there any other issue that should be considered in the preparation of the Alliance's work-plan to strengthen its mission, objectives and role? Please elaborate.

June 2, 2004
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