



# Terms of Reference for policy dialogue facilitation

## Overview

According to the World Health Organization, nearly half of the world's population lacks full coverage for essential health services and about 100 million people experience extreme poverty due to health care expenses. Universal health coverage (UHC) gives individuals access to services for some of the most significant causes of disease, and in doing so it can reduce global poverty rates and further global progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals.

The political will to pursue UHC in sub-Saharan Africa has reached unprecedented levels. An increasing number of countries in the region have committed to working toward this goal, with some establishing health financing strategies and/or implementation plans for advancing UHC with the support of numerous partners, projects, and initiatives. However, most of these countries are encountering obstacles to implementing health financing policies that can improve coverage, expand access, and support financial protection. Effective coverage, especially of the hardest-to-reach population groups, remains low. Financial sources (including from donors) can be fragmented, and resources can be insufficient and/or inefficiently allocated. Inequities can result from unsuitable financing modalities such as user fees and out-of-pocket payments. The ability to provide a high-quality package of services is often constrained by poor purchasing arrangements that limit provider flexibility and autonomy. Macro-level challenges at the country level (such as low domestic resource mobilization and inadequate service quality or availability) have been well documented, but less attention has been paid to operational challenges during implementation of policies and strategies that are intended to advance UHC.

*There is unprecedented political will in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) to pursue the goal of UHC*

The path to UHC is not one-size-fits-all. Each country's journey to achieving UHC must be flexible, adaptive, and sensitive to local political, economic and policy priorities, and have achievable solutions to overcome key obstacles. Progress toward UHC thus requires policy dialogue, in the form of structured processes that gather a wide range of stakeholders to contribute to the development and implementation of policy changes through evidence-based discussions, workshops, and/or consultations. The process of developing country-specific solutions must include all key in-country stakeholders if the solutions are to be relevant and sustainable. This will ensure that UHC policies, strategies, and activities will be grounded in the diverse needs of the population and take into account the views of all actively engaged parties. A variety of perspectives not only contributes to the richness of policy dialogue, but it can help align opposed or even contradictory views to advance common UHC goals and contribute to homegrown solutions that are technically valid, politically feasible, and socially acceptable. Whether the focus is on a specific disease or expanding coverage to the most vulnerable,

*Country-specific solutions ensure that UHC policies, strategies and activities are grounded in the diverse needs of the population and consider the viewpoints of all actively engaged stakeholders*

UHC goals will be achieved sooner if countries draw on local expertise and foster inclusive policy dialogue. Hence, facilitation plays a crucial role.

From the experience of establishing the health insurance AM-ARCH consultative committee in Benin and Uganda's Inter-ministerial committee tasked with the development of their UHC roadmap, these policy dialogue platforms brought together senior officials from line ministries, subject matter experts, representatives of civil society organizations and private sector, donors, frontline providers, health district managers with a clear mandate to advance the policy agenda. These policy dialogue platforms have reported the huge benefit of process facilitation to spark debate and organize the productive sharing of innovative ideas that have helped to achieve their identified goals.

## Objectives

The objective of these terms of reference is to identify a core set of functions needed to facilitate inclusive policy dialogue to advance country journey towards UHC.

## Scope of work

To accelerate progress towards UHC, it is essential to coordinate effective collaboration within policy dialogue platforms under the leadership of the convener who is driving the country change process. Policy process facilitation is a technique that consists of assisting the productive exchange of thoughts and ideas among stakeholders in order to identify health system issues, develop, implement, assess and adapt pertinent solutions.

Either institutions or individuals who are trusted and seen as credible by the participants who have the contextual knowledge to navigate the complexity of health system issues to be resolved can play the process facilitation role.

## Functions

Three functions are critical for effective policy dialogue facilitation: managing inclusive engagement, brokering knowledge, and capturing learning for further iteration during the process.

**Managing inclusive engagement** includes ensuring that key stakeholders are represented in the forum and at any meetings and that they have equal opportunity to be heard. A useful guideline is to have government ministries, departments, and agencies make up at least 50% of the participants, to ensure their ownership and buy-in. It is advisable to also include at least one representative each from academia, civil society, the private sector, and community health and development partners. Inclusive interaction also means seeking perspectives on all content from all participants equally, with all opinions given voice and equal audience.

**Brokering knowledge** involves diligently engaging, exploring, and reviewing existing and new information sources in order to pull out key information that should be highlighted. It also involves presenting the findings in an easy-to-understand format, using channels that are accessible and appropriate for all types of stakeholders. It is important to not only consider mainstream knowledge but also to ensure that outlier and lesser-known concepts, ideas, and sources are shared and considered.

**Capturing learning** means noting the critical areas of uncertainty or curiosity among the engaged stakeholders at the beginning of the process, setting up an approach to generating and synthesizing learning around those critical themes, and using ongoing learning to inform and improve on UHC policies, processes, and goals. The facilitator should review recordings, notes, minutes, and videos throughout the process and document and analyze them to distill knowledge, information, tips, trends,

guidance, and facts that can inform research, planning, program design, course correction, and strategy development.

## Typical policy dialogue facilitation tasks

The tasks that a UHC policy dialogue facilitator typically perform include:

- Helping stakeholders build a common understanding of the concept of UHC at the country level
- Collecting, reviewing, and analyzing key documents to fully understand the political economy of UHC
- Supporting stakeholders in identifying the operational challenges to effectively implementing health policies
- Collecting, reviewing, and analyzing key documents to fully substantiate all stages of the health system reform or strengthening process
- Carrying out stakeholder analysis to delineate the roles and responsibilities of parties and institutions that have a key role in implementing the policies and strategies
- Supporting the spearheading ministries in ensuring a multisectoral approach to UHC policies and strategies
- Bringing the essential people to the table to collaborate on co-creating the best processes and solutions to address challenges
- Creating communication pathways to strengthen and support learning, advocacy, and accountability within the UHC process
- Working with champions within key ministries to ensure that the recommended policies are translated and institutionalized within their respective departmental initiatives
- Collecting, combining, synthesizing, and sharing local and global evidence to inform local decision-making
- Helping key ministries to coordinate effectively with one another to implement policies
- Moderating regular inter-ministerial meetings to assess progress and identify corrective measures
- Documenting critical agreements reached
- Helping stakeholders to regularly assess and adapt their policies, strategies, and activities in a structured, evidence-based manner
- Keeping the timeline and priorities on stakeholders' radar to maintain implementation momentum

### Some key considerations for effective UHC policy dialogue facilitation

The policy dialogue facilitator should:

- **Listen! Listen**
  - Comprendre les défis et le contexte
  - To understand challenges and context
  - To draw out explicit needs and expectations
  - To contextualize and apply knowledge
- **Acknowledge existing local expertise and its value**
  - Work with and within existing structures and forums to push the UHC agenda without reinventing the wheel.
- **Be humble**
  - Spotlight the participants' expertise and intervene when there is a risk of stakeholders deviating from the pathway to success.
- **Facilitate a collaborative learning experience**
  - Encourage the exchange of ideas and experiences to achieve goals.
  - Ask questions often and in a deliberative way to expand thinking.
  - Ensure that both the facilitator and participants get the best output from the process.

The policy dialogue facilitator should **not**:

- **Presume to have all the answers**
  - Foster open discussion about possible answers if they are not there yet.
- **Ignore or undermine local knowledge**
  - Tap local knowledge so solutions take into account contextual evidence that can enhance the relevance and acceptability of solutions.
- **Instruct the stakeholders on what changes are needed**
  - Play a role in change management but “support from behind.”
  - Bring in evidence but ensure that stakeholders make their own decisions.
- **Bring ready-made solutions**
  - Solutions should be customized to each context.

## Desired facilitator expertise and qualifications

Successful policy dialogue facilitation requires both technical expertise and soft skills. Here are some critical traits that are required.

- Demonstrated technical skills relevant to the policy dialogue topics
- Demonstrated analytical judgment
- Demonstrated knowledge about and experience in navigating various government offices, ministries, departments, and agencies
- Demonstrated experience and skills in managing effective communication among a large range of stakeholder, including high-level government officials
- Demonstrated integrity and ethics
- Demonstrated **sensitivity and adaptability** in working with people of all tribal, cultural, and racial backgrounds, nationalities, genders, and ages
- Ability to treat all people equally and fairly without favoritism
- Ability to work in a diverse and multicultural environment
- Self-motivation and demonstrated ability to work well under pressure and meet strict and competing deadlines
- Demonstrated ability to handle confidential and politically sensitive issues in a responsible and mature manner
- Demonstrated openness to change and ability to manage complexities

## Dimensions of success measurement

Below are some key dimensions of success for a facilitated process. Policy dialogue organizers can develop evaluation metrics for these areas that are appropriate for the specific country setting.

- **Reinforcement Capacity strengthening**
  - Ability of policy dialogue participants to articulate and express their point of view
  - Opportunities for peer exchanges within and outside the country
- **Inclusivity**
  - Variety of participants who are empowered to engage in policy dialogue
- **Sustainability**
  - Formalization of the policy dialogue
  - Resource mobilization for the dialogue forum
- **Achieved results**
  - Inclusion of indicators in the mandates of the policy dialogue forum



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