Health Systems Funding Platform
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. What is the Health Systems Funding Platform?
The Health Systems Funding Platform (the Platform) is a way for development partners, including the GAVI Alliance, the Global Fund and the World Bank, with facilitation from the World Health Organization (WHO), to improve how they work together in countries. It will enable countries to use new and existing funds more effectively for health systems development, and help them access donor funds in a less complicated manner that is more aligned to their own national processes. The Platform is *not* a global pool of funds: funds will still flow from the participating financers – currently the GAVI Alliance, the Global Fund and the World Bank.

2. What is the Platform's objective?
The Platform is part of the broad international effort in strengthening health systems to accelerate progress towards the targets for the health related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)[i].

The overall goal is to make health dollars go further in countries, to build stronger health systems that deliver health services equitably and sustainably for better health outcomes. One way the Platform will contribute to this is to reduce transaction costs for countries by improving co-ordination amongst funders around existing funding and new requests for funding, reporting, financial management, monitoring and technical support. More harmonized support for country-owned and led national health strategies/plans should, in turn, enhance aid-effectiveness and bring better results.

The Platform is also intended to leverage additional funding for countries in need.

3. Why this Platform now?
With five years remaining to the 2015 deadline for achieving the MDGs, progress is still off track in many countries, particularly for health related goals to reduce child mortality (MDG 4), improve maternal health (MDG 5) and combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases (MDG 6).

The Platform was established in 2009, at the recommendation of the High Level Taskforce on Innovative International Financing for Health Systems, as one way to accelerate progress towards MDG targets and achieve better national health results by coordinating, mobilizing, and channeling health resources – from both domestic budgets and international aid - to comprehensive, integrated, country-driven health plans and strategies.

This responds to increased country demand over recent years.

4. Who is involved in the Platform?
The Platform is being developed initially by the GAVI Alliance, the Global Fund and the World Bank, facilitated by WHO, in consultations with countries and other key stakeholders, including civil society. While much of the focus in the early stages is on harmonizing and aligning GAVI, the Global Fund and the World Bank health systems support in countries, the Platform is inclusive to other development partners, civil society and the private sector. It is anticipated that other development partners will join the Platform in future – for example by using a shared approach to assessing, funding, monitoring and managing the health systems parts of a national health plan/strategy.

5. How does the Platform work?
The Platform follows IHP+ principles[ii]: that all donors and partners recommend supporting one national health plan, and will harmonize and align their results frameworks and monitoring and evaluation plans. In practice, how this will work will vary from country to country.

Funding mechanisms will also be simplified. Countries will have the option of applying through one application form to both GAVI and the Global Fund for funding for health system strengthening. Countries which have done a Joint Assessment of National Strategies (JANS)[iii] will have the option to submit a funding request based on the jointly assessed national health plan.

In terms of existing funding, the Platform may be more about the development partners finding ways to simplify planning, financing, and procurement and monitoring procedures. Here, improvements -- such as agreeing to a common reporting system and a common set of indicators (including those that reflect MDGs 4, 5, and 6), and establishing common financial management processes, including joint audits and simplified procurement systems -- will be used to reduce transaction costs and duplication.

6. What are the benefits to countries (i.e., what does "more harmonized and aligned" mean)?
International development funding for health systems strengthening will be:

- Better matched with country priorities;
- More in line with national processes for planning, reporting, financial management and technical support (i.e. decreased administrative burden and better use of time and energy);
- More predictable funding over the course of a country's planning cycle.

7. Where are we at?
The GAVI Alliance, The Global Fund, The World Bank and WHO have already come together in several countries to support harmonization and alignment for increased aid effectiveness and stronger health systems, in line with IHP+ principles. The work varies according to each country's priorities but is focusing on developing one financial management framework, one monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework, and one joint review process – using the JANS tool – in support of one national health strategy. For example, implementing the Platform might include reviewing national health policies and strategies, pooling and non-pooling partners together with the government, and identifying areas for synergy towards the conclusion of a joint financial agreement between development partners and the Ministry of Finance. This is a step forward in reducing transaction costs by committing partners to using one financing management framework. It also enables health authorities to increase their energy and focus on improving access to essential health services. Nepal is one of the first countries to sign a Joint Financing Agreement based on the Platform's principles[iv]. Development partners are working with health ministries in several other countries to review current funding agreements and procedures for M&E to identify opportunities to better harmonize health systems support. Country updates will be posted on the Platform website[v].

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[i] http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/
[ii] http://www.internationalhealthpartnership.net/
[iii] http://www.internationalhealthpartnership.net/en/about/j_1253621551
[iv] http://go.worldbank.org/EA06V5VAK0
[v] http://go.worldbank.org/0D4C6GPQU0