

HDC external evaluation: Presentation on findings, conclusions and recommendations

Recommendations
implementation workshop

21 September 2023



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1. Introduction

Evaluation objectives and framework

- **Evaluation objectives:** Review of HDC from inception in 2015 to Dec 2022, to support better positioning for impact on data to support progress on health-related SDGs at country level

Pillar 1: Relevance & Coherence

1. What is the value add of the HDC in relation to the work of global partners and in response to country needs? How relevant has the “re-orientation” of 2018-19 been and is there a need to further change any of the HDC objectives and design to better support achievement of the SDGs?

Pillar 2: Efficiency

2. How efficient has the HDC governance and operational structure (e.g. constituencies, Secretariat, Working Groups, etc.) been in practice? Has it built the right networks and partnerships and supported inter-agency communication as well as been productive and added value?
3. How has the merger with SDG GAP data and digital accelerator supported the functioning of the HDC?

Pillar 3: Effectiveness, sustainability & impact

4. To what extent has the HDC achieved its objectives of: (i) strengthening country capacity; (ii) improving efficiency and alignment of technical and financial investments in health data systems; and (iii) increasing the impact of global public goods on country health data systems? What is the evidence on HDC work contributing to reduced reporting burden and fragmentation alongside increased innovation and capacity at country-level? What aspects have worked well and less well in the achievement of objectives?
5. To what extent is the HDC platform and its activities financially and programmatically sustainable? What are key issues hindering or facilitating sustainability?
6. To what extent has the HDC contributed to (i) the improved availability and quality of health data, aligned with national priorities and (ii) improved use of data for evidence-based decisions, budget making, monitoring and implementation of health related SDGs?

Evaluation conclusions, lessons learnt and recommendations

7. What are the overall evaluation conclusions and lessons learnt? What are the key recommendations for the HDC to reorient itself to focus and address necessary data needs to speed up progress to the 2030 health related SDGs?

Evaluation methods

- **Mixed-methods approach**
 - Document review
 - 64 stakeholder consultations with HDC constituency groups, HDC SRG members including HDC Co-Chairs, HDC Working Group Co-Chairs, HDC Secretariat, UHC2030 and SDG GAP Secretariat, and WHO
 - Six country case studies (including a mix of countries where the HDC has been active (Botswana, Cameroon, Malawi and Nepal), recently disengaged (Tanzania) and not yet active (Pakistan))
 - An e-survey which reached 27 respondents
 - Data analysis of the HDC member base
 - Limited analysis of other WHO partnerships for best practice and learnings
- Challenges in implementing a **theory-based evaluation**
- Use of **robustness assessment framework** for findings

2. Key findings and conclusions

Relevance and Coherence

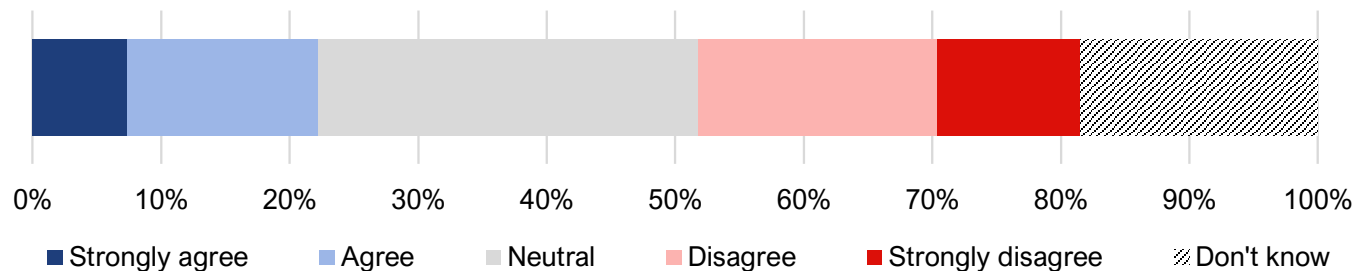
- **HDC objectives** are relevant to country priorities and needs, but too broad, unclear and ambitious
- **HDC activities** lack focus and do not present an integrated plan towards objectives
- **HDC model** requires reform to deliver on its mandate
 - Diverse multi-stakeholder base and convening power lie at the heart of HDC's added value but HDC needs to meaningfully engage **partners** in support of its mandate and delivery of workplans, beyond selected WGs
 - Need for focused approach and functioning mechanisms to support **country engagement**
 - **Governance structure** of HDC is complicated for its size and budget, and needs to better support strategic direction and accountability among stakeholders
- HDC needs to clearly and concisely articulate its **value-add** proposition so to partners and country stakeholders

Efficiency

- **HDC governance structure** is complex and heavy-handed, especially given limited human and financial resources
 - **Constituency structure** is critiqued as burdensome and of limited value
 - **SRG** lacks clarity in process and leadership due to weak member engagement, clarity needed for purpose & procedures of SRG meetings, & poor communication between SRG representatives and constituency groups
 - There is significant variation in the structure and purpose of the **WGs** which causes confusion amongst stakeholders on their roles and impacts delivery and accountability. Coordination of the WGs has been challenging.
 - **Secretariat** is highly constrained by resources and increasingly having to drive the work of the HDC
- Diversity of **HDC membership base** is widely regarded as a strength, but only a small percentage of members are actively engaged
- **Communication flow** between HDC governance structures not functioning optimally, affecting **decision-making, transparency and coordination**
- **SDG GAP D+D Accelerator merger** led to some efficiencies, but implementation not done in strategic/ transparent way; low visibility of merger

- **TOC** not well-defined and used, and poorly understood by stakeholders
- Lack of relevant and appropriate **M&E framework** (including for WGs) and ad hoc progress **reporting**
- **Limited progress to date by the HDC against its three objectives** – partly due to the range of challenges the HDC faces with its structure and design and the long periods of hiatus and low Secretariat functioning

Figure 2.5: Percentage of survey respondents who feel the HDC has made substantial progress on its objective since inception



- **COVID-19** as a disrupter and facilitator for data coordination efforts

Knowledge brokering

Despite an increased focus in recent years by the HDC on knowledge brokering, there remain many challenges to reaching country stakeholders effectively (website, governance calls and wider events, knowledge products and global public goods)

Advocacy, comm. & political will building

Limited success in advocating for increased technical and financial alignment across partners with individual donor priorities continuing to shape HIS agenda

Several activities have been viewed to lack long-term strategic vision and follow through

HDC areas of work and assessment

Working Groups

Variation on performance by WG – key facilitators include strong leadership from Co-Chairs, accountability and ownership from partners and stable resourcing

Key issue is lack of strong and sustained country engagement, with limited evidence on country impact to date

Country level activities and results

Limited tangible achievements of the HDC at the country level (country HDCs, country missions and specific activities have lacked needed follow up)

Conclusions and lessons learnt

- HDC launched amidst heightened political commitment
- 2019-20 re-orientation identified similar challenges to those identified in this 2023 evaluation
- Stakeholders nearly unanimous that there is a need for the HDC, but it should be reorientated and reformed (not disbanded), with diverse multi-partner structure viewed as critical
- However persistent challenges remain:
 - Broad objectives, lacking specificity, too ambitious in relation to resources
 - Lack of clarity amongst stakeholders on what HDC is set up to do, what it does in practice and how to engage with HDC – country stakeholders not viewed strong benefit
 - Heavy-handed governance structure – does not support strategic decision-making, transparency, accountability, poorly understood
 - Limited partner engagement – Secretariat as principal resulting in further dissonance
 - Inability to deliver against country-focused mandate
 - Limited information and awareness of progress and results facilitated by HDC
- Re-boot 2.0 in order to urgently address longstanding challenges

3. Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Reduce the scope of the HDC to focus on where it can add value and has a comparative advantage, and develop a supporting Theory of Change, workplan and M&E framework

Implementation responsibility - HDC Board (see recommendation 2) and HDC Secretariat

Timeline: Immediate/ Short Term; Capacity requirements: Medium

- Would ensure resources not stretched too thin and allow for more effective planning, implementation and follow-up
- Also help sharpen HDC profile and communicate value-add
- **Develop an updated TOC** which is closely aligned with the updated scope
- **Develop a clear workplan** closely linked to key partner activities and workplans and focusing on providing accountability, with linkages to WGs
- **Develop an updated M&E framework** which builds on the workplan, and regularly report against it – “light touch”, focus on output, outcomes and impact rather than activities, regular reporting
- **Develop an investment case around the new HDC objectives and workplan** to serve as both a communication and fundraising tool, aligned and build on work being conducted on the investment case for good data governance and HIS and the upcoming broader data dividend work being presented at the UN SDG summit in September

Assessment of HDC role going forward

- CEPA assessment– HDC core role aimed at country impact but through global coordination:
 - (i) knowledge brokering- development of knowledge products and dissemination- leveraging wide-ranging technical expertise and multistakeholder membership, WG structure, and contextualising global products for country contexts
 - (ii) support learning through workshops and conferences
 - (iii) advocacy and communications for more efficient and effective HIS – focusing on highlighting benefits of donor coordination and costs of fragmentation
- Areas where the HDC should not consider and/ or de-prioritise:
 - (i) HDC as a funding entity for country HIS needs
 - (ii) ‘direct support’ for operationalisation of country coordination on HIS
 - (iii) wider capacity building through direct TA provision and country-by-country approach
 - (iv) more engaged work on affecting donor alignment and coordination beyond advocacy efforts

Recommendation 2: Simplify the HDC governance structure and create a small Board to provide strategic direction to the HDC

Implementation responsibility - HDC Secretariat

Timeline: Short term, Capacity requirements: Low-Medium

- Simplified structure comprising a small Board for strategic direction and guidance and a Secretariat for day-to-day delivery only (i.e. remove other governance structures)
- The Board should include a small number of highly engaged stakeholders including the largest funders for HIS, select technical partners, and some stakeholders representing country and CSO voice (5-7 members)
- Not a political level Board, although should include senior members from representative organisations
- The Board should have a clear mandate for providing strategic direction to HDC i.e. define the HDC's objectives and scope of work, review of annual work plans, assess progress and course corrections over time
- The Board should oversee implementation of evaluation recommendations

Recommendation 3: Improve the engagement with countries by developing a country engagement strategy that is well communicated and understood, and does not focus on a preselected list of countries

Implementation responsibility - HDC Secretariat, with support from partners and guidance from the Board

Timeline: medium term, Capacity requirements: Medium for the HDC Secretariat

- **HDC country engagement strategy should be clearly communicated to partners and countries**
- **Move away from pre-selected list of HDC countries**
- **Strengthen country engagement and ensure a bottom-up / demand driven approach to HDC's work on HIS, e.g. through:**
 - Rely on WHO regional and country offices to “feed-up” country priorities
 - Engage with key donors who have country presence and/or existing structures to solicit country views to understand what HDC can contribute
 - Build up from priorities in country HIS strategies and investment roadmaps
 - Work through regional advisors recently engaged by HDC
 - Annual survey of country needs
- **Re-orient events and meetings to ensure maximum utility for countries-** including through South-South sharing of experiences and lessons

Recommendation 4: Implement actions to enhance effectiveness of WGs and ensure their outputs are directly relevant for countries

Implementation responsibility - HDC Secretariat and WG leads

Timeline: short term, Capacity requirements: moderate

- **Develop annual plans for the WGs and support their use and follow-up**
- **Support country engagement of the WGs** through (i) increased country stakeholder participation in WGs, (ii) making sure WGs are aware of country priorities solicited under Recommendation 3, (iii) explore ways for WGs to tailor global public goods for specific country contexts
- **Improve the connection and collaboration between WGs** through annual workplans, joint knowledge products/ public goods, touch points of WG co-chairs, etc.
- **HDC Secretariat should continue to support the coordination, agenda, and follow-up of WG meetings**
- **Consider facilitating access to HDC partner funding for WG activities**

Recommendation 5: Ensure streamlined and focused communications tailored to different audiences and stakeholders and carefully consider value add of these communications for respective stakeholders

Implementation responsibility - HDC Secretariat

Timeline: short-to-medium term, Capacity requirements: low- medium

- **Communication to HDC members should be tailored/ targeted** to ensure value-add to the audience being reached
 - HDC should map out different types of information/ communication needs, key audience, and how best to reach them
- **HDC meetings should become targeted with clear agenda and follow-up actions points and offer specific value-add for participants** rather than standing and formulised invites for constituencies and members
- **Improve the website to increase utility to country stakeholders** and explore other collaboration tools



UK

Queens House
55-56 Lincoln's Inn Fields
London WC2A 3LJ

T. **+44 (0)20 7269 0210**

E. info@cepa.co.uk

www.cepa.co.uk



cepa-ltd



@cepaltld

Australia

Level 20, Tower 2 Darling Park
201 Sussex Street
Sydney NSW 2000

T. **+61 2 9006 1308**

E. info@cepa.net.au

www.cepa.net.au

