MoPH Statement on Good Governance in the Health Sector, April 2015

Ministry of Public Health

Statement on Good Governance of the Health Sector

Summary
Governance or more specifically, good governance, has taken on much greater importance in the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) under the leadership of the new Minister, Dr Feroz. He is strongly committed to ensuring the ministry is a well governed, gold standard state institution whose functioning better benefits the health of the Afghan people. All this is within the framework of the political will and commitment of the President and Chief Executive Officer to have good governance throughout government.

This statement first clarifies what is meant by ‘good governance’ as applied to the current context of the MoPH in Afghanistan. It then mentions a few priority issues that the ministry has started working on and others that will be addressed over the coming months and years. All will be highlighted in the forthcoming new national health strategy 2016-2020. This statement goes on to give some of the implications of seriously addressing governance in health and current challenges to getting positive results.

A working definition of good governance of the health sector and what it means for the MoPH
Good governance of the health sector is that the MoPH better functions as a capable, accountable and responsive state institution that uses its’ power and authority to benefit the health of citizens. This means that the MoPH, as part of state building will reform itself to make more effective use of government funds and development aid, ensure equity and inclusiveness, be more transparent and better enforce laws and regulations. Failure to do so will result in yet more corruption and poor quality, inequitable health services.

Key issues
Much of the work will involve strong leadership and analyzing, diagnosing, designing and setting priority governance issues, ensuring their effective and efficient implementation through a process of change management and monitoring and evaluating the results. Part of the reform process will involve developing a management style and culture that is supportive of staff at all levels of the health system, encourages a lessons learned and a life long learning culture and that determines what is best for the country, taking into account international experience. Currently the key issues within governance that have been identified by the Minister are:

- Transparency
- Accountability
- Responsiveness
- Equity and Inclusiveness
- Rule of law
- Aid and government effectiveness
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- Anti-corruption measures and their enforcement
- Coordination both inter-ministerial/sectoral and internal to MoPH
- Public-private investment partnerships
- Financing, costing and use of resources
- Policy and strategy including strategic vision
- Laws and regulations and their enforcement

Implications and challenges

In practice this means that the MoPH will need to ensure:

- The capability to set and enforce good rules, regulations and laws, and ensure that public health interventions and health services are equitable, accessible and meet people’s needs
- Responsiveness - that people and communities really do participate in, and are given a voice in determining how services are implemented; that within a strategic vision all policies and strategies meet the needs of the poor; and that the value of equity is soundly implemented
- Accountability, whether regarding the rule of law or internal to the MoPH, accountability is visibly practised through transparent

It will not be easy to seriously do something about ensuring good, quality governance of the health sector. The most obvious implication is that it will need changes to be made which is what institutional development is all about\(^1\). People often use the terms governance and institutional development interchangeably, which can create confusion.

A challenge is how to take the wealth of international experience in strengthening governance and ensure it is adapted to, that it fits, within the socio-cultural, political and economic context in the country. This especially applies to how international aid, in the form of technical assistance (TA) personnel, functions. The ministry is determined to take lessons learned and ensure that in the future there is a better and lasting impact on the development of the capability of the ministry as an institution and of individual Afghan health personnel\(^2\).

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\(^1\) See the MoPH Statement on Institutional Development, April 2015
\(^2\) Also see – MoPH Position Paper on Capacity Building, April 2015