

How to conduct a Joint Assessment of a National health Strategy based on country experience

Background

Joint Assessment of National health Strategies (JANS) was developed to assist countries and their development partners to ensure and increase confidence in an effective national health strategy, which partners can support. The aim of the JANS is to support the achievement of health goals by:

- ensuring the health strategy is sound, relevant and achievable, and
- encouraging alignment of partners behind a single national strategy, including attracting funding for the strategy.

The idea of a joint assessment is not new. The JANS brings an agreed tool and an inclusive approach to the assessment, providing a common standard for countries and international agencies to use. It does not guarantee funding from funding partners who participate in the JANS process. This paper was written as an aid to stakeholders who are considering using the JANS to decide *when* and *how* to carry out a joint assessment. It draws on experience from five countries: Ethiopia, Ghana, Nepal, Uganda and Vietnam. The paper should be read in conjunction with the JANS tool and guidelines, and related documents, which are available on the website:

http://www.internationalhealthpartnership.net/en/about/j_1253621551.

Key points and recommendations

JANS' objectives differ according to country context. However, the paper identifies three objectives common to all JANS:

1. Developmental - improve the health strategy
2. Building confidence- increase funders' confidence in the quality of the strategy
3. Minimizing transaction costs - reduce the number of separate assessments.

Based on the five country cases, the paper makes recommendations in order to achieve these objectives:

- A successful JANS is demanded and led by the country. In all five country experiences except Nepal, a local coordinating group was formed and chaired by the Ministry of Health.
- Timing is everything. In Nepal, the JANS was timed to take place during a multi-donor appraisal mission and contributed to the appraisal process. In Uganda, Ghana and Vietnam, the JANS was timed to fit within the country plan development, consultation and approval processes.
- A strong, independent element in the assessment team is critical.

- The JANS is meant to be an inclusive, joint assessment that involves civil society and other stakeholders in the health sector. Engagement at political level is important for the JANS to lead to improvements in the national health strategy.
- National stakeholders should be familiarized with the JANS tool before the assessment. Experience (from South East Asia and Ethiopia) shows that it takes time to get used to the tool and for partners to understand it.
- In addition to the technical validity of the national health strategy, the JANS should assess whether there is evidence of its feasibility and likelihood of implementation.
- Ensure follow-up to keep the momentum going. It is important to record how the Joint Assessment findings have been taken into account by country partners.

Reference

Walford. V (2013), How to conduct a Joint Assessment of a National health Strategy based on country experience