

**NDPHS Evaluation Team 2008
Third Meeting
Bad Neuenahr, Germany
24 September 2008**

Title	Minutes
Submitted by	Secretariat
Annex	Annex 1 – proposed Terms of Reference and timeline of the NDPHS <i>ad hoc</i> Strategy Working Group Annex 2 – List of Participants
Summary / Note	These Minutes present the most important information and statements presented, as well as, where available, the conclusions and decisions made during the meeting.

1. Opening of the meeting and welcome

The Chair of the evaluation team, Mr. Robert Shearer, Canada, welcomed the participants.

2. Adjustments to Dirk's report as proposed by the CSR

The Chair asked if there was a need to reflect any comments of the CSR in the consultant's report.

The consultant, Mr. Dirk van den Boom, explained that he was planning to add a few additional linguistic improvements to the report and would submit the final version to the members of the evaluation team on 25 September 2008¹.

With reference to the comments raised by ILO during the CSR meeting, the Evaluation team **noted** that the core message of the ILO was already reflected in the report and considered it therefore not necessary to include additional revisions.

The consultant asked for an evaluation of his performance in conducting the assigned tasks. He also asked for an official note sent to CEval that with his final submission of the report, the tasks assigned to him had been accomplished, so that the final payment could be processed.

The evaluation team agreed that a letter of recommendation would be sent to him from the NDPHS CSR Chair.

¹ These amendments were received by the Chair of the Evaluation Team and the Secretariat on time.

3. General discussion of the CSR comments

In view of the general feedback that the CSR had provided, the Chair remarked that it was important to keep in mind that a lot of the Expert Group's work was actually based on voluntary efforts.

Denmark suggested to include a tour de table in the PAC 5 annotated agenda, asking all the delegates to announce their views concerning the evaluation, the Terms of Reference of the to-be-established Working Group, and the mid-term vision for the NDPHS.

Norway intended to inform the Expert Groups during the forthcoming joint Expert Group Meeting in Oslo that the time was not ripe yet to discuss the evaluation and the therein outlined possible role of the Expert Groups, as it still required further discussions by the Partners.

Further, Norway felt that the Partnership needed a clearer commitment from Partners, especially with regard to setting up a sustainable financial foundation and to the Partner's vision to where to steer the ship. A commitment from a higher political level was therefore crucial to find out how much effort the political leaders would want to put into the NDPHS. The to be established Strategy Group should therefore also be in contact with the Northern Dimension, as the Partnership was part of the NDP policy.

The Secretariat shared Denmark's suggestion and underlined that the Strategy Group needed to know the views of the NDPHS Partners in order to prepare a solid outcome. Hence there was a need to encourage more lively discussions during CSR and PAC meetings.

The Meeting **agreed** to Denmark's proposal to include a tour de table of 5-10 minutes interventions for each partner in the PAC 5 annotated agenda. In order to facilitate discussions during PAC, it further **agreed** that key questions were to be circulated from the CSR Chair to the Partners before PAC 5 with a series of crucial questions in relation to the NDPHS future work and focus.

Based on this decision, the Evaluation Team then drew up a draft list of questions of relevance which could be submitted to the NDPHS Partners, e.g:

- Partners' top priorities within the NDPHS, their aim for the NDPHS, such as for example a stronger focus on strategies and policies or on project implementation. And if both priorities were to be addressed by the NDPHS, what would be the Partners first priority (Norway);
- The Partners priorities in thematic areas, and also in view of their preparedness to be a Lead Partner for Expert Groups (Secretariat);
- The Partners view on possible NDPHS mid-term goals (Germany);
- NDPHS Membership issues such as the Associated Partner status (Germany);
- The Partners willingness and ability to contribute to the funding of projects (Denmark) and to the support of Expert Groups and other possible NDPHS activities (Norway);

- The Partners view on whether the NDPHS should be a financier of projects by contributing to the pipeline or a facilitator of projects by making better use of the national resources, knowledge and bi-lateral contacts (Germany);
- A question related to whether there was need to do major adjustments for the NDPHS at this point in time (Chair - Canada);
- The Partners description how the NDPHS work was coordinated in their countries, whether it was simply one person dealing with NDPHS matters or a group of people and whether there was a political and financial support from the Ministry for the NDPHS work carried out (Norway).

The Meeting **agreed** that the questions addressed to the NDPHS Partners should primarily touch the issues of Partner's

- priorities,
- mid-term goals,
- willingness and possibilities to contribute to the partnership beyond the current scope (in cash or kind),
- need for major adjustments within the NDPHS current structure
- internal support system for NDPHS work.

4. Terms of Reference for the newly to-be-established Strategy Working Group (as proposed to CSR)

The Chair introduced the draft Terms of Reference of the Strategy Group, attached as Annex 1, and provided a brief outline of the timeframe for the Terms of Reference of the Strategy Group. The work should be finalised for the CSR 16 meeting which was to be held in fall 2009, so that the major decisions could be brought to the attention and approval of PAC 6 in Oslo in 2009.

The Meeting **agreed** on the proposed timeline.

Norway reiterated that the Terms of Reference should ensure that the items covered in the Terms of Reference were "included but not limited" as there may be other, additional items that the CSR Partners/ the PAC wished to Terms of Reference the Strategy Group with.

The Meeting **agreed** to Norway's proposal and further **agreed** that the Strategy Group should be open for all countries to join in, if they desired to do so. The composition of the Group should take into account a regional balance as well as the different roles that countries currently play in the NDPHS. The Strategy Group should therefore be composed of:

- at least one member from the Nordic Countries
- at least one member from the Baltic countries and/or Poland
- at least one member from the Associated Partners
- Chair and Co-Chair country as well as
- any other country that wishes to join
- plus the Secretariat.

The Meeting further **agreed** that, when discussing issues related to Expert Groups, the Strategy Group may set up a Sub-group with Expert Group representation. The Strategy Group should be in touch with both NDPHS Partner countries and Partner organisations during the process.

5. Any other business

The Chair recalled Germany's submission of a position paper about the evaluation process that had not been addressed during the last Evaluation team meeting in Berlin, as the discussions had focussed on a different scope. He therefore asked the Secretariat to distribute it to the Evaluation team members electronically after that meeting, reiterating that the paper would be of value for the decision-making process in the Strategy Group later on.

6. Closing of the meeting

The meeting closed at 15.45 hrs.

Reference	Annex 1
Title	Proposed Terms of Reference and Timeline for the NDPHS <i>ad hoc</i> Strategy Working Group (SWG)
Submitted by	Canada
List of Appendixes	Appendix 1 - Proposed follow-up actions for the NDPHS <i>ad hoc</i> Strategy Working Group (SWG)
Summary / Note	<p>The Evaluation Team was tasked to present a Terms of Reference and a Timeline for the to-be established NDPHS <i>ad hoc</i> Strategy Working Group (SWG) for discussion and approval at the next PAC meeting, November 19th, 2008.</p> <p>This document was discussed during the ET 3 meeting. Upon approval of the minutes the document will be submitted to PAC 5, as requested by CSR 14.</p>

Proposed Terms of Reference and Timeline for the NDPHS *ad hoc* Strategy Working Group (SWG)

1. Background

Following the conditions set by the Oslo Declaration to carry out an “overall review and evaluation of the Partnership...in 2008”, the NDPHS had established an Evaluation team. The team was composed of CSR representatives from Canada (Chair), Denmark., Germany, Lithuania, Norway and Russia. It conducted the evaluation with the help of the NDPHS Partners and an independent consultant that was appointed by the evaluation team.

According to the Terms of Reference for the evaluation of the Partnership in 2008 (c.f. CSR 12 minutes²), the evaluation team was expected to present a written evaluation report not exceeding 50 pages to the CSR. The CSR Chair, in cooperation with the Secretariat was in charge of ensuring the progress of the evaluation, from the beginning until the delivery of the final report.

The evaluation team presented a consultant report, a selection of proposed consultant recommendations for follow-up and an overview of Partner country responses to the evaluation to the CSR 14 meeting on 23 September 2008 in Bad Neuenahr, Germany. The CSR agreed that an overall evaluation package was to be presented to the 4th Partnership Annual Conference on 19 November 2008 in Ottawa, Canada.

The CSR further suggested to establish a Working Group amongst CSR members to ensure the timely follow-up of the recommendations presented by the evaluation team

² www.ndphs.org/?download,1518,CSR_12_Minutes.pdf

and mandated the evaluation team to draft a Terms of Reference and timeline for the newly to be established Working Group.

2. Scope

The overall task of the Working Group is to further examine the Strategic direction and NDPHS Working Group recommendations as outlined in the evaluation consultant's report, and possible other recommendations coming from the CSR Partners and the NDPHS Evaluation Team.

The working group will address recommendations of the consultant report related to

- Strategic recommendations, including strategy, vision and organization (sections 3.1.3, 3.2.4, 3.3.4, 4.2.6, 5)
- NDPHS Expert Groups (sections 3.3.4 and 4.2.6)
- Additional recommendations made by NDPHS partners that were raised either during the CSR 14 or the PAC 4 meeting.

The working group will not address those issues that may already be decided by CSR 14 or PAC 5 or that can be carried out by the Secretariat, such as:

- Website improvement and PR material (section 4.1.4 No 1-3)
- Survey of all multipliers that the NDPHS may have to better promote itself (section 4.1.4. No 4)
- Review of Terms of Reference of the Secretariat (section 3.1.3 No 5)

3. Composition

The evaluation will be composed as follows:

- at least one member from the Nordic Countries
- at least one member from the Baltic countries and/or Poland
- at least one member from the Associated Partners
- Chair and Co-Chair country as well as
- any other country that wishes to join
- plus the Secretariat.

The Working Group will be chaired by *[to be decided during PAC 5]*

The CSR Chair, in cooperation with the Secretariat, holds the overall responsibility of ensuring the progress of the implementation of the recommendations listed in Annex 1.

4. Approach to address the CSR-recommendations for follow-up

Strategic recommendations

For the follow-up of the strategic recommendations the group will work under the assumption that the legal capacity is already in place.

Expert Group related recommendations

The working group may establish a sub-group to look at Expert Group recommendations as part of its mandate. It is recommended to include an Expert Group representative when discussing the Expert group-related follow-up recommendations.

Development of a mid-term vision for the NDPHS

The working group will develop a concrete proposal taking each recommendation into account. This will either be done by commenting on if and how a certain recommendation should be implemented or, if the recommendation calls for a review of a certain situation, the group will provide a consolidated piece of opinion. The total compilation of the comments for each recommendation will form a proposal for a mid-term/or long-term vision of the work of the NDPHS. The proposal will be presented to the CSR for consideration.

Accompaniment of the implementation of the Recommendations

Depending on the CSR decision, the Working Group may be mandated to further investigate into the feasibility of certain recommendations or working group suggestions and revise their proposal if need be so that a smooth implementation of the given recommendations can be ensured.

5. Recommendations to be taken into account

The list of all strategic and expert –group related recommendations that the CSR has agreed upon is attached as Appendix 1.

6. Proposed timeline

November 2008: Nomination of the Working Group members

December 2008: 1st meeting with assignment of responsibility for a set of recommendations to comment on

February 2009: 2nd meeting: consensus finding and status report on the progress of each of the individual recommendations

April 2009: Interim report to CSR 15

May- September 2009: Additional meetings (if required)

September/October 2009: Final report to be submitted to CSR 16

Reference	Appendix 1 to the proposed Terms of Reference of the NDPHS <i>ad hoc</i> Strategy Working Group
Title	Specification of the key recommendations for proposed follow-up
Summary / Note	This list provides an overview of all recommendations of the evaluation report that the NDPHS <i>ad hoc</i> Strategy Working Group needs to address. As the recommendations were copied directly from the consultant's report, it is possible that some of the recommendations cover both, strategy and Expert Group-related recommendations.

Proposed follow-up actions for the NDPHS *ad hoc* Strategy Working Group

- Legal capacity (top priority!), and other Recommendations related to strategy, vision, organization (sections 3.1.3, 3.2.4, 3.3.4, 4.2.6, 5)

Section 3.1.3

6. the NDPHS should encourage the Secretariat, after the current EU-funded project ends, to apply for additional project-oriented funding, either for a technical or a content oriented purpose, either in self-responsibility or in collaboration with Expert Groups. The Secretariat should build up and maintain its competencies in regard to project application, project-management and project-monitoring in order to have sufficient practical day-to-day experience. This will be not only helpful to provide a higher output of NDPHS as a whole, but it will also put the Secretariat in a place of functioning as a centre for advise in case of project-implementation-activities by the EG.

7. if the NDPHS is happy with the perspective of the Secretariat to continue as an agency of project-implementation, it should be considered to increase the number of the permanent staff of the Secretariat at the level of senior-adviser by at least one person. The consultant advises against outsourcing project-implementation beyond the administrative duties outside the Secretariat. Experience shows that outsourcing project implementation makes monitoring and quality-management much more difficult, while mistakes and shortcomings reflect directly to the network.

Section 3.2.4

1. the legal and financial requirements for becoming and staying as a member should be revised and made as concrete as possible. This might include the

abolishment of the arbitrary introduced “associated partner”-status and replacing it by an “observer”- status for those not interested or capable of full involvement, but without any rights in decision-making. This might also include certain mechanisms in regard to membership-status in cases of non-payment of membership-fees or non-activity in the NDPHS-bodies for a certain period of time, e. g. minimum criteria like activity in at least one Expert Group and regular attendance of at least PAC-meetings etc. As membership of the NDPHS is closely linked to membership in the ND in general, some of these reforms might need the blessing of a higher level of decision-making in order to ensure conformity and avoid possible conflicts.

3. the PAC-meetings will be held only every second year instead of annually – like e. g. already practised in the sister-organization CBSS -, and that the last CSR-meeting of a non-PAC-year will be officially mandated by all partners to be a decision-making-body for everything which has to be dealt with in the meantime. This saves one additional meeting and therefore reduces strain on resources.

4. the bi-annual PAC-meeting will then be specifically designed and prepared to allow the generation of political legitimacy and endorsement of the best possible quality. Wide-range lobbying of participating ministries in regard to participation will be a prerequisite, a side-event-programme which targets also a wider audience and serves as a public-relations-event and inclusion of media-representatives¹⁶ should also be considered.

Section 3.3.4

1. should decide if the two-fold approach towards health and social well-being is to be maintained or the current focus in health issues should be made official policy. This could either lead, in accordance with a new process of EG-development the consultant will recommend in the following, to a better balance of the two issues or, if so decided, to abandon social policy and totally concentrate on health¹⁸. In any case, if the international prominence of NDPHS will increase due to increased activity, it will be highly unsatisfactory if the current imbalance between the officially stated goals and the activities performed remains to be.

2. should elaborate and develop clear criteria and a transparent process upon which new Expert Groups should be established and/or old Expert Groups can be dissolved. Newly founded EGs should have not only a clear mandate from the beginning, but also be restricted in regard to the duration of their existence and the focus of their activities. Changes in focus and time have to be formally approved and criteria not met should be viewed as an indicator which can lead to the dissolution of the EG. Decisions towards the establishment of new groups should be based on clear indicators as well as a unanimous political will to pursue the matter, with clear, documented commitments by all relevant partners to participate.

3. should consider the establishment of a mechanism which forces Expert Groups to defend – in regular intervals, yearly or every second year – their own existence, with the possibility of dissolution of the Expert Group in the case of failure to legitimize its continuation. Every Expert Group should be forced to bring forward arguments for its continued existence, with the reservation by the CSR that if the arguments are not totally convincing, knowledge about the subject is not sufficient or additional deliberation is needed to employ an external expert to make an assessment of these

arguments in order to support or contradict them. This could generally include a peer-review-process in certain intervals, conducted by experts in the respective fields, all depending on available funding.

4. should review its collaboration with WGCC and discern in how far NDPHS is really benefiting from the groups status as associated Expert Group and decide if and how the cooperation can be intensified or the formal bond should be abolished. For the consultant, it is more or less useless to “boast” an associated Expert Group where the association is only on paper and exists mainly through putting the WGCC’s annual report into the NDPHS-documentation.

Section 4.2.6

1. NDPHS should reflect and consult itself about the indicators and criteria by which it wants to measure its own success as an organization. There will be need to differentiate between the cumulative “results” of all Expert Groups and the Secretariat and between the impact of the organization itself, which is supposed to be more than just the addition of its components. Possible indicators could be reflection about NDPHS-activities in the issue-oriented media, invitations to international fora and conferences, instances of advice-seeking and advice-giving from governments or international organizations, projects implemented through the project-pipeline, amount of users accessing the database etc. Future evaluations might benefit from a self-definition of success- factors and it will be important for impact-monitoring by the Secretariat and for reporting purposes.

4. NDPHS should define clearly how the term “facilitation” should be used in the future and what it includes if an Expert Group claims to have “facilitated” a concrete project. Does it mean that the Expert Group has drawn the tender? Does it mean that it has written the application or just given a general idea? Does it mean it has conducted its own evaluation or at least assessed existing ones? Does it mean that individuals and organizations connected to NDPHS are personally or institutionally responsible for the project and wouldn’t have conducted them without the “facilitation” of NDPHS? There is room for definition here, and the consultant would like to stress to define the term more strictly than too loose. This definition should be decided upon unanimously and afterwards should be adhered to in all reporting and monitoring, so that the claim to describe a project as “NDPHS” can be made with a higher degree of validity.

5. NDPHS plans for at least one continuous project directly applied for, implemented, monitored and evaluated by the Secretariat, in order to have a certain, beneficial activity permanently linked to the partnership. Projects should be chosen for an overall benefit for the whole partnership, therefore they will either touch on issues of research or fill in loopholes within the partnership’s activities which are not addressed by the Expert Groups and which, based on the decision of the partnership, do not call for a new Expert Group at this point of time. This can be the case when a NDPHS-stakeholder proposes to deal with a specific issue that fails to get sufficient support by all members to be dealt with in a new Expert Group, but seemed to be important enough to be a topic of a project, therefore dealing with it on a more focussed and clearly more temporary basis.

6. NDPHS Expert Groups facilitate, support in application and evaluate at least one “flagship project” per Expert Group, and at maximum two or three. If the numbers are higher, danger is that with current resources available supervision of these projects will be only tentative and results will not feed sufficiently in NDPHS more theoretical work, e.g. policy recommendations. NDPHS should only involve itself in concrete implementation where the framework for this is ideal and sufficient capacity apparently exists. Evaluation should be taken more seriously if NDPHS wants to rightfully claim a genuine, autonomous learning-process. These projects, which link their existence clearly to NDPHS, should be featured prominently on the website (maybe with a distinct category “NDPHS projects”).

9. NDPHS should, in regard to evaluation of itself, repeat the exercise of an external evaluation every four or five years to update the look from the outside. To make this external evaluation more easy and therefore probably cheaper, self-evaluation activities could be performed in regular intervals (like e. g. yearly questionnaires); if recommendation 5 will be accepted, this will also help future external evaluators tremendously.

Section 5

1. NDPHS should be more oriented towards project-activities, but avoid the pitfalls of being too much an implementing agency on its own, and take the idea of facilitation seriously. Under facilitation, the consultant wants to summarize

- a. taking the initiative to formulate project proposals in collaboration with suitable implementing agencies
- b. taking note of developments within these projects by receiving and scrutinizing monitoring reports from the implementing agencies
- c. evaluating the impact of these projects by either
 - i. conducting its own evaluations, depending on funding or
 - ii. facilitating external evaluation by others, depending on funding or
 - iii. receiving and scrutinizing evaluations already planned and conducted and putting all three of these into a common framework
- d. raising the findings from project-level to a policy-level (with the aim of...)

2. Being not only a facilitator of projects, but foremost a *facilitator of ideas* and concepts, working and functioning as a mainstreaming and dissemination agency into the level of political decision-making in all of its member-states, a work for which the current database/ pipeline-project can only be one stepping-stone.

- Expert Group related (sections 3.3.4 and 4.2.6)

Section 3.3.4

1. should elaborate and develop clear criteria and a transparent process upon which new Expert Groups should be established and/or old Expert Groups can be dissolved. Newly founded EGs should have not only a clear mandate from the beginning, but also be restricted in regard to the duration of their existence and the focus of their activities. Changes in focus and time have to be formally approved and criteria not met should be viewed as an indicator which can lead to the dissolution of the EG. Decisions towards the establishment of new groups should be based on clear indicators as well as a unanimous political will to pursue the matter, with clear, documented commitments by all relevant partners to participate.

Section 4.2.6

2. The Expert Groups should be tasked with the duty to compile and assess evaluations available for projects they claim to have facilitated one way or the other. This compilation should be updated on an annual basis and contain summaries of evaluations (be it self-evaluations or external evaluations) in order to have an overview of results and impact of these projects. EGs should in addition seek funds to conduct evaluations themselves or motivate external experts linked to NDPHS to apply for evaluations of facilitated projects in order to build up its own evaluation capacity and to compile worthwhile information about “best practice” which can be translated into general conclusions. The current database could be extended with a separate access to evaluation reports (which is quite different from just “papers”), which will enhance the overall credibility and attractiveness of the website.

3. NDPHS should ask Expert Groups to identify and describe openings for dissemination and mainstreaming of their own topics in national decision-making in ND-member states, in order to be able to organize targeted activities – like workshops or information exercises – to access decision-makers probably not yet involved in NDPHS and to influence important issues in health (and maybe social) policy. EG experts should be able to elaborate who and where in their respective country a specific topic might be received with open minds, so that the visibility of NDPHS and its impact can be increased.

4. NDPHS should define clearly how the term “facilitation” should be used in the future and what it includes if an Expert Group claims to have “facilitated” a concrete project. Does it mean that the Expert Group has drawn the tender? Does it mean that it has written the application or just given a general idea? Does it mean it has conducted its own evaluation or at least assessed existing ones? Does it mean that individuals and organizations connected to NDPHS are personally or institutionally responsible for the project and wouldn't have conducted them without the “facilitation” of NDPHS? There is room for definition here, and the consultant would like to stress to define the term more strictly than too loose. This definition should be decided upon unanimously and afterwards should be adhered to in all reporting and monitoring, so that the claim to describe a project as “NDPHS” can be made with a higher degree of validity.

6. NDPHS Expert Groups facilitate, support in application and evaluate at least one “flagship project” per Expert Group, and at maximum two or three. If the numbers are

higher, danger is that with current resources available supervision of these projects will be only tentative and results will not feed sufficiently in NDPHS more theoretical work, e.g. policy recommendations. NDPHS should only involve itself in concrete implementation where the framework for this is ideal and sufficient capacity apparently exists. Evaluation should be taken more seriously if NDPHS wants to rightfully claim a genuine, autonomous learning-process. These projects, which link their existence clearly to NDPHS, should be featured prominently on the website (maybe with a distinct category “NDPHS projects”).

7. NDPHS should develop strict formal guidelines for future publications prepared by the Expert Groups in regard to structure, wording and other format-issues. NDPHS documents ought to look like coming “from the same mould”, despite individual differences within the texts. Formal guidelines from other international organizations – like e.g. those of the World Bank – could be taken as an example.

8. NDPHS should emphasize that Expert Groups should develop their proposal to the CSR about the focus of their activity always in an inclusive way, adding ownership to the topics chosen. Topics which are at the heart of only a few members will not gather sufficient motivated support from other EG-members to participate fully in any task connected to it. If it seems to be difficult to find a common denominator – that is, if no proposed focus finds the goodwill and engagement of a majority of EG-members – than this is a possible indicator in regard to the future viability of the problematic EG as a whole. Here, some minimum standards of participation should and could be defined and adhered to. A working group in which only a chosen few are working and the rest is looking is futile. If the topic is nevertheless regarded as important by the stakeholders of NDPHS, other forms of organization – like a project run by the Secretariat with external experts – could be considered instead of an EG.

Reference	Annex 2
Title	List of participants
Summary / Note	This list includes participants who attended the Meeting

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