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**DISCUSSION PAPER
ON EXPERT GROUP MANDATES
AND OTHER EXPERT GROUP GOVERNING DOCUMENTS**

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for:

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There was an attempt in CSR meeting in Vilnius in April 2005 to elaborate together with existing EGs' "mandates" for their work. A document was produced but it was never elaborated or made systematic vis-à-vis three existing EGs at that time. Only EG on HIV/AIDS has made an attempt to prepare an action plan/programme for 2006-07 (although they have named it "working programme/strategy")

To have clear basis and framework for expert groups' work is essential. By nature they operate like networks rather than fixed working groups with a clear hierarchy or budget, and therefore making their goals and operative mechanism easily clear to all is paramount.

The term "mandate" is confusing. Mandate in English means¹ "command or authorization to act in a particular way on a public issue". More logically the "Mandate" to NDPHS Expert Groups should come from the decision made by CSR endorsed by PAC indicating that an EG shall be established with certain purpose, as indicated in the minutes of the meeting. Annual Action Plan of the Partnership updates and/or endorses the mandate as appropriate.

Problem 2: Each EG needs to elaborate a clear "Terms of Reference" (could also be called "strategy") explaining the general mode of work how they plan to operate and make a positive impact to existing problems in their given mandate.

It would be desirable, that those principles in the TOR/Strategy, which are common to all groups, should be presented in identical form for each EG. This would make the work of EGs more systematic, text shorter to read, and easier for outsiders to understand. Based on the extensive material already produced, identifying this common base should not be difficult (see later examples in this paper). However, the coordinators/ chairpersons/ international technical advisors of each EG should get together and review the draft of common principles in the TOR/Strategy.

In addition to the common principles in the TOR/Strategy, each EG should add their specific characteristics into their own TOR/Strategy².

A) COMMON BASIS FOR EXPERT GROUP TOR/STRATEGY

Using existing documents provided by the Secretariat (especially "Mandate Proposal for Expert Groups"(CSR, Vilnius April 2005) an attempt is made to give an idea how the EG TOR/Strategy could look like [a) Common basis and b) SIHLWA EG TOR/Strategy specifics]. The purpose of this exercise is to get feed-back from the CSR and Secretariat, for the upcoming EG meeting to be held in Helsinki 16-17 May 2006. Probably the common TOR/Strategy could still be shortened by removing repetitive statements and editing text.

<p style="text-align: center;">Principles³ for responsibility for and financing of expert groups/networks under the Partnership</p>

- The basic principle should be that responsibilities and costs for Expert Groups and their activities should be shared among as many Partners as possible being able and willing to participate. Two Partners, one Chair and one Co-Chair should have the responsibility for chairing, organising and co-ordinating their work. The financing of meetings and of a

¹ Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary 1997

² The EG on HIV/AIDS has apparently developed their strategies further than any other group so far. Their work could be used as a good example for other groups, whenever relevant.

³ These principles were agreed in Copenhagen (CSR Sept 2004)

possible International Technical Adviser (ITA) or other support should be agreed on in every group.

- Non-Partners who take part in the co-operation of the Partnership are most welcome to participate and help financing the activities of Expert groups.
- Considering the possibility of a growing number of expert groups/networks, nothing should prevent the same Partner to be Chair of two or more groups, or Chair in one group and Co-chair in another group if the Partner in question so wishes and if it is not contested by other Partners.
- The members of an expert group should be nominated by their relevant authorities. Their participation should be regarded as part of their normal work.
- All participating Partners or other bodies should in principle finance their own participation in meeting etc. The host of a meeting may finance the participation of participants whose costs cannot be covered by their own authorities.
- The Partnership Secretariat should be kept informed of the activities and should assist when needed but should normally not actively take part in co-ordinating the work.
- The expert groups should provide a possible Partnership website/database with information concerning their work.
- Partners and other interested parties are invited to consider taking the responsibility for an Expert Group.

Structure of the Expert Group

- The Expert Group should consist of
 - Chairperson;
 - Co-chairperson;
 - International Technical Advisor (“ITA”)/ Coordinator who also can function as a secretary and co-ordinator for the group;
 - Delegates with expertise and competence in necessary fields as appropriate for the task of the EG. It would also be an advantage to include persons with expertise in project planning.
- It may be advisable that if the chairman is recruited from a country from the eastern⁴ part of the ND area – the co-chair was recruited from the western part, or the other way around. It would be advantageous if the representatives in the group could represent as many of the ND partners as possible (different countries and different organisations, such as WHO, ILO, Nordic Council of Ministers, EC, etc.).
- The members of the Expert Group should be appointed/ nominated⁵ by the different countries (respective ministries or other relevant authorities) and organisations in the Partnership and their relevant authorities. The representatives should have relevant expertise as indicated by the Expert Group(s). The EG can invite other guests having relevant specific expertise to participate the meetings. Sufficient representation of social sector expertise should also be taken into consideration.

⁴ it should be made clear what are the criteria for ”eastern” and ”western” countries/partners. A better categorization might be ”countries in transition” and ”other countries/partners”. Hence possibility could be to categorize Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and RF in the first category and the remaining in second category

⁵ As a ”soft” rule partners could nominate at least one expert for each EG and/or sub-group, with two alternates. It would be up to the EG to decide as to how many of the nominees could attend a given event depending on the size of the venue and availability of travel funds for participants.

- Expenses for attendance in the Expert Groups' work should in principle be covered by the Partner and their participation should be regarded as part of their normal work.
- The chairperson and co-chairperson and should be elected by the group on annual (or biannual) basis. International Technical Advisor/ Coordinator would usually require funding decisions, in which case the organization/partner providing the funds would obviously need to have final decision on contracting a person for the task. A mechanism to take the views of the EG into consideration should be elaborated. ITA/ Coordinator's main function is to give uniformity, support and advice to the projects through site visits and collaboration with relevant external bodies in the programme field. ITA/ Coordinator is also actively involved in all activities of the group, described in the mandate of the group.
- In general Expert Groups' work is based on consensus providing recommendations and they are not direct decision making bodies for the Partnership. However, should a situation arise for recommendations where consensus is not reached, each participant country/organization should count as only one.

How the Expert Group should work

- Advocacy and lobbying for Public Health and social well-being: Expert Group shall provide and communicate "the collective knowledge", promote improvement of the general awareness, and work for development of positive attitudes towards within the field of their mandate. The EGs will also promote health gain and public health oriented health service systems and health sector reforms.
- Expert Groups contribute to the development of national policies that respond to the needs and requirements of Partnership member countries. Map and identify country needs for technical and financial support to scale up the national programme and initiate the process of requesting assistance. In association with partners, working groups support efforts to provide technical and other assistance to government and national partners in planning, implementing and monitoring programs in their field of expertise. This can include meetings with authorities, visits in participating countries and written information.
- Expert Group will promote and raise general understanding on Northern Dimension Partnership in Health and social well-being, its objectives, actions and the action of the working groups.
- Experts taking part in the group collaborate as equal partners.
- The idea of the Partnership is to facilitate communication and collaboration between EU member states and neighboring countries in the north. Therefore, participation of partners from north-Western Okrug of Russian Federation (reaching from Kaliningrad in the west to Komi in the east with approximately 14.5 million inhabitants) and from the federal administration in Moscow would be essential.
- Expert Groups working language will be English. However, in order to facilitate participation of Russian speaking members, every effort to provide English/Russian interpretation should be made.
- Expert Groups should meet at least 2 times⁶ every year and between meetings keep in touch via e-mail. The responsibility to host the meetings could circulate between the members of the group.
- Expert Groups can establish sub-groups as feasible. Sub-groups would select their own coordinator(s)/chairperson(s).

⁶ More meetings are possible depending on the need and funding available

- Expert Groups monitor and evaluate the results (peer evaluation) of projects and activities implemented under ND initiative, in order to ensure that financing is channeled to achieve maximum impact for health gain.

Tasks of the Expert Group

- Keep updated review of ongoing projects and activities in EG field of expertise in Partnership Countries;
- Network with relevant partners and prepare a “Stakeholder Analysis” in EG field of expertise;
- Give professional advice and support to authorities. EG members are high level professionals and representatives of their countries, acquainted with both practical work and the policies behind it. Therefore, they can provide professional information and advice on trends, threats, and development needs in the field of EG mandate to relevant ministries, embassies and other bodies consisting of meetings with authorities, visits in participating countries and written information.
- Seek for collaboration with other possible groups and authorities as relevant (= networking) as relevant and feasible.
- Act as technical referee group for new project proposals, project identification, planning, implementation and monitoring. The Groups can make recommendations concerning project proposals or implementation and assist in planning as requested. The Groups will inform and consult the NDPHS Secretariat and other relevant stakeholders about the Groups’ actions and the development of the sector as necessary. They assist in initiating, catalyzing, and promoting relevant project initiatives, evaluate and discuss project proposals with project owners and also support ongoing projects. Negotiate specific terms and conditions and establish assessment mechanisms, with an emphasis on performance and verifiable results.
- Advice and assist project groups in contacts with financing organizations and to recommend relevant project proposals for financing
- Assist project groups in co-ordination with other stakeholders, promote networking, and co-ordinate the work with other NDPHS expert groups.
- Formulate criteria for future support of projects.
- Provide the Partnership website/database with information concerning its work.
- Take gender and environmental questions and the needs of various vulnerable groups into consideration whenever feasible.
- Establish close connections with other Expert Groups and promote functioning cooperation with them as prerequisite for successful implementation of future tasks
- Co-operate closely with the Partnership Secretariat.

Output of the Expert Group

- Oversight of the implementation of strategic objectives defined by the group and approved by the ND Partnership
- Support and expert contributions to policy evolution
- Partnership building and promotion of activities relevant for the achievement of the goals of the Partnership

- Promotion of coordination and networking of relevant activities
- Monitoring and peer evaluation of ongoing activities

Priority areas identified

This part should be specific for each Expert Group TOR/Strategy, not to be included in the common part of the TOR/STRATEGY