

THET management response to HPS Evaluation Synthesis Report

The Tropical Health and Education Trust (THET) welcomes the outcomes of the Health Partnership Scheme Evaluation Synthesis Report conducted by Triple Line and Health Partners International (the HPS Evaluator) on behalf of the Department for International Development. This paper constitutes THET's response to the recommendations made in the evaluation report and what measures THET will put in place to implement the recommendations.

Effectiveness and HPS fund management

Recommendation 1: *“to encourage partners who are implementing existing projects to scope out how they might address some of the health systems constraints to their projects by linking with and enhancing existing government or donor programmes”.*

A number of partners implementing HPS projects already engage with the wider health institutions, other organisations, leaders and national bodies. However, THET recognises that further support is needed to ensure partners engage with actors with complementary skills in the health sector in a more strategic way. THET will work to collate learning from partners, which have taken a broader whole health system approach in their projects, to inform future health partnership work. THET is also working to ensure the adoption of a broader health systems approach through our country offices.

Recommendation 2: *“continue to support the partnership work with funding and should strengthen further the technical assistance, networking and advocacy work”.*

THET will continue to disseminate publications, tools and guidance both produced by THET and by partners to share learning from a wide range of health partnerships. THET will provide platforms and facilitate connections between existing partners and other actors in the global health space. This includes social media platforms, sharing and learning events, workshops and webinars. THET is also using its country offices in Uganda, Zambia, Somaliland and Tanzania to share lessons learnt from the health partnership projects. An end of programme symposium will be held in Dar es Salaam in Tanzania in the first quarter of 2017. It will serve as a stage for partners in Asia and Africa to share successes, challenges and lessons learned, and network with HPS partners and other actors who work in complementary areas. On this occasion THET aims to build the capacity of partners in areas where skills gaps have been identified, including partnership, project and financial management.

Recommendation 3: *“to work with one or two partnerships to conduct a thorough gender analysis of their context, while at the same time building skills to undertake this kind of work and to design appropriate ways of integrating gender equality approaches into project design, implemen-*

Gender is a central component of [THET's strategic plan for 2016-2021](#) and the Sustainable Development Goals. THET will conduct a gender analysis study of a number of projects in 2017. The study will inform guidance on how to integrate gender equality and social inclusion in partnerships for health in the future. THET will also continue to support partners to improve collection of quality data on the number of trainings, level of improved skills/performance post-training, and broken down by gender, cadre and type of training.

Value for Money

Recommendation 4: *“to develop an understanding of how VfM [Value for Money] could be enhanced through the development of synergies with other aid programmes in key countries and*

THET has developed a number of [case studies on the Value for Money \(VfM\) of the health partnership projects](#) supported. We will continue to gather evidence to enhance our understanding of the VfM generated through the health partnership approach. This will include collating learning from health partnerships which have a broader whole-hospital or health systems approach, and exploring collaborations with other aid programmes in key countries and between partnerships. THET is also exploring ways to promote synergies between health partnership projects and other health actors through its country offices. This will inform THET’s approach to health partnership projects in the coming years.

Recommendation 5: *“to ensure financial and record keeping are enhanced in particular areas in order to better understand and manage how funds are spent”.*

During the final phase of the HPS, we will work closely with partners to maximise the use of funds. A financial management toolkit will be shared with partners. THET will consider the use of time sheets to monitor staff time. It is worth noting that a number of health partnerships already monitor their in-kind contributions to the project. We will investigate the possibility of monitoring in-kind contributions from all health partnerships in the future.

Partnership, relevance and ownership

Recommendation 6: *“to develop country-level networking and learning opportunities for partnerships”;*
And Recommendation 8: *“to explore how networks and strategic funding could enhance the development of synergies between partnerships”.*

THET recognises the need for platforms at both country and regional level to ensure networking and learning opportunities between health partnerships and other actors with complementing skills in the health sector. Our offices in Uganda and Zambia are already undertaking activities of this sort. We recognise the potential for this approach to be expanded in future health partnership projects.

Recommendation 7: *“continue to evolve their approach for strengthening partnerships in order to improve effectiveness”.*

THET has developed its [Principles of Partnership](#) in conjunction with the health partnership community, with the purpose of improving the quality and effectiveness of partnerships between UK and low- and middle-income country (LMIC) health institutions. THET has also developed a number of [tools](#) to support health partnerships and volunteering through partnership, including [volunteer support](#) and [volunteer sending guidance](#). THET will continue to produce appropriate learning and guidance resources for the health partnership community.

Research during the development of THET's latest policy report, [In our Mutual Interest](#), also highlighted the need to renew focus on such areas as ownership, transparency, communication, sensitivity and country need in order to further strengthen partnerships. THET will continue to encourage partnerships to implement the Principles of Partnership, initially through conducting a self-assessment. This will provide further understanding on where additional support is most needed. From there further training resources will be developed. This work will also respond to the HPS Evaluator recommendation to conduct *"studies to enhance the understanding of the partnership "relationship" "*.

Recommendation 9: *"to communicate the interesting role that UK volunteers are playing in HSS [Health Systems Strengthening] in LMICs".*

THET's policy report, *In our mutual interest*, gathers learning from throughout the lifetime of HPS. THET will continue to highlight the powerful role UK volunteers are playing in HSS in LMICs. THET co-chairs the NHS Staff Volunteering Group with Health Education England. The group supports communication projects including work to improve volunteering information on the NHS Health Careers website and working with NHS Employers on succinct guidance to clarify the practices and rights of employers and employees in relation to international volunteering.

In relation to the HPS evaluator recommendation to strengthen due diligence and support to volunteers, THET has developed a [Duty of Care toolkit](#) to ensure that partnerships develop robust duty of care procedures. Partners have self-assessed themselves against a number of competencies and THET is following up with support to partners who have training needs. THET will continue to develop guidance to support partnerships in their management of volunteers including effective selection processes, appropriate induction pre-departure, management in country and return to their countries of origin.

Recommendation 10: *"to strengthen dialogue with key UK stakeholders on how to strategically plan learning and benefit for the UK health system with partnership and volunteering programmes while at the same time maximising the benefit for the low and middle income countries"*

THET, as co-chair of the NHS Staff Volunteering Group, continues to work with Health Education England (HEE) to roll-out a nationwide Continuing Professional Development Toolkit to support international volunteers to reflect and gather evidence on how they benefit as well as the challenges they face during their overseas experience.

THET will continue to strengthen dialogue with Governments, HEE, Public Health England, NHS England, NHS providers and other key stakeholders to develop a more strategic approach to planning programmes with a vision of co-development and mutual learning at their core. In particular, THET will explore opportunities to partner with learning institutions to support the development and monitor the achievement of clear learning outcomes for UK and LMIC actors.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

Recommendation 11: *“to build in time and funds to be able to collect and synthesise outcome and impact data coming from projects”.*

THET continuously monitors all live grants, ensuring timely data and quality reporting from all health partnership projects. This ongoing work will inform current logframe outcome and output indicator targets. THET is also collecting case studies of impact to articulate the difference that HPS has made. These case studies will address output, outcome and impact indicators as well as VfM. THET will also assess the value of the THET Uganda Partnership office in enhancing the impact of the health partnerships at the country level. It will involve a study of a UK health institution working with partners in Uganda and other LMICs, comparing their experiences in Uganda and with partnerships in other countries. THET will also commission a study of different population groups benefitting from improved health services. This will complement the data from project reports in the final programme report.

Conclusion

THET appreciates the external assessment, and find the findings and recommendations helpful. THET is committed to implement the HPS evaluators' recommendations. THET's responses above to the HPS Evaluator recommendations will wherever possible be applied to the current programme. However given that most projects have six months or less left for implementation, there are limitations as to how much these responses can be applied. That said, all of the recommendations will inform THET's future health partnership work. This includes developing strategic programmes in discussion with key national partners in a selected number of countries.

