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# IMPROVING CHILD HEALTH IN SOUTHERN SUDAN

## BASICS III

## INTRODUCTION

The health system in Southern Sudan has been seriously compromised by decades of conflict and neglect. As a result, morbidity and mortality burdens in the country are among the highest in the world. A significant feature in post-conflict settings is the transition from relief to development in which clinic-centered, emergency-funded services evolve to a county-focused system that is supported by the national government and development assistance. Gaps in health services can occur if there is not sufficient funding, coordinated planning, and human capacity to ensure a smooth transition. In addition, the recent trend towards decentralizing health systems requires that the capacity of health management personnel at the central and county levels also be quickly developed to ensure county-wide adherence to national health policies, such as the Basic Package of Health Services.

## ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

USAID/BASICS carried out two activities focused on the post-conflict transition in Southern Sudan. The project conducted an assessment of the post conflict transition gap and developed a tool to assess decentralized management capacity.

### **Post Conflict Transition Assessment**

The post-conflict transition gap assessment methodology was developed by BASICS in Liberia and adapted for use in Southern Sudan. The purpose of this assessment was to analyze the impact of the shift in financial resources for health from relief to development in U.S. Government (USG) supported areas and to produce recommendations for USAID and the Ministry of Health to minimize the decline of health services and strengthen the health system during the post conflict period. USAID/BASICS conducted this activity from August 2007 to March 2008.

#### *Facility Transition Database*

Data was collected from all USG-funded health partners and compiled into a database termed the *Facility Transition Database*. The database contained the facility name, location, supporting partner, funder, contract end-date, and facility operations (i.e. services offered, number of health workers, etc.). Information on over 50% of known functional facilities in Southern Sudan was collected and recorded in the database. In addition to the facility listing, USAID/BASICS also created a series of digital maps of the Southern Sudan health sector and the post-conflict transition gap. These maps were provided to and discussed with USAID and the MOH. It was hoped that this information can provide a foundation for the MOH's own efforts to map the remaining health sector.

The information in the Facility Transition Database was used to conduct a facility prioritization exercise to assist USAID/OFDA in assessing their strategic priorities and making funding decisions based on public health significance to minimize the closure of critical basic health services for women and children. The exercise examined the “relative public health significance” of each facility based on access, epidemiology, population factors, facility use, and facility-level resources available. A scoring and ranking system was developed to determine the relative public health significance of each facility in relation to one another. This information was used by USAID/OFDA in strategic planning exercises to preserve access to care for the greatest number of people.

The database was also used to quantify the post-conflict transition financial gap by identifying the number of facilities that did not have funding guaranteed for the next year. The analysis revealed a potential resource gap that could threaten existing health care access for a large part of the population. USAID/BASICS found that a large majority (77%) of awards were scheduled to end within 9 months of the assessment. While many of these contracts would be renewed, funding was not guaranteed, given shifting donor priorities. The assessment recommendations urged the Government of Southern Sudan and donors to coordinate with one another to identify and fill resource gaps and avoid a potential funding crisis that could threaten health care access.

The assessment team also met with County Health Departments (CHD), State Ministries of Health (SMOH), and communities to understand the ability of the health system to provide services should relief partners withdraw due to lack of funding or shifting priorities. The findings indicated that the health system did not have the capacity to manage service delivery due to a lack of trained health workers, minimal funding for salaries, lack of drugs and supplies, and the high rate of returning populations. More importantly, in cases where NGOs had already attempted to transition services to the government, service delivery was almost non-existent.

The major recommendation emerging from this assessment suggested that the MOH of Southern Sudan, in close collaboration with donors and partners, develop an operational transition framework (national health sector implementation plan) to ensure that funding for health services would be preserved in the post-conflict period. It was proposed that this be developed through a workshop involving representatives from the national, state and county levels, donors, multilaterals and health partners.

To this end, USAID/BASICS developed a transition workshop concept paper that was approved by USAID/OFDA and the MOH. The MOH also formed a Steering Committee to lead this process in-country. The workshop was not held due to difficulty in attaining sufficient buy-in from other partners and donors and the costs of the workshop were extremely high due to the logistical and resource constraints common in Southern Sudan.

As part of this effort, USAID/BASICS also developed a Transition Framework to depict the stages of the relief-to-development transition and suggest steps that need to be taken during those stages to support the transition process.

### **Decentralized Management Assessment Tool for Post Conflict Transition States**

At the request of USAID's Office for Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA), USAID/BASICS developed a Decentralized Management Assessment Tool for Post Conflict Transition States to examine the management capacity of a county health system and team and explore the factors that influence their ability to transition from relief to development.

The purpose of this tool is to assist MOHs and donors to determine gaps and make recommendations to support the decentralization of health program management to the county level. This would be accomplished through the following objectives:

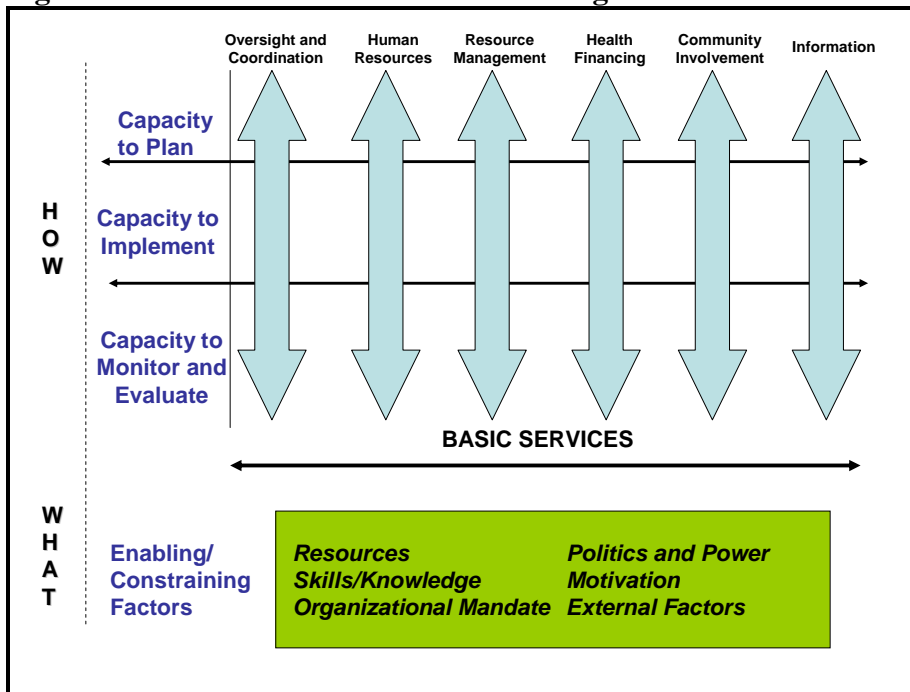
- Determine stage of transition of the decentralized county health system along six health system components.
- Identify the enabling and constraining factors that influence the health teams' ability to manage (plan, implement, and evaluate) a decentralized health system.
- Determine the gaps that need to be addressed to improve the ability of the health teams to manage the county health system.
- Propose recommendations to strengthen the ability of the health teams to manage the decentralized county health system.

As depicted in Figure 1, the tool is used to evaluate the ability of a county health management teams to plan, implement, and monitor six essential health system components (which are shown across the top of the figure, and have emerged from health systems literature and USAID/BASICS Post Conflict Transition Assessments in Southern Sudan and Liberia). The green shaded area at the bottom of the figure also shows factors identified by Derick Brinkerhoff<sup>1</sup> that enable or constrain the capacity of the Health Teams to perform its functions.

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<sup>1</sup> Brinkerhoff, D., 2007. *Capacity Development in Fragile States- Discussion paper No 58D*, European Centre for Development Policy Management, Maastricht (May)

**Figure 1: Elements of Decentralized Management Assessment Tool**



The Decentralized Management Assessment Tool in Post Conflict States consists of four different instruments designed to gather and verify information along the six components:

1. Relief to Development Transition Stage Questionnaire: Relevant county stakeholders (NGOs, health teams, and central MOH) describe the current transition stage across the different components.
2. Quasi-Structured Interview: Health teams and Central Ministry of Health answer questions about the relationship between various actors in the county and existing guidelines and information that support coordinated service delivery.
3. Document Review: Checklist of important documents such as policies, guidelines, tools and other information utilized by health teams in order to plan, monitor and manage county health activities.
4. Guided Group Discussions: A guided group discussion with health teams, partners, and community members to further explore findings from the questionnaire and quasi-structured interviews in order to: determine the enabling and constraining factors; and identify strengths to build on and weaknesses to address.

Due to difficulties in scheduling in Southern Sudan, the tool was field tested in July 2009 in Liberia, refined, and shared with USAID/OFDA.

## **TRANSITION**

USAID/BASICS shared the health sector mapping database and digital maps with the SSMOH and other partners who were involved in a regional PHC mapping exercise. The information collected was also used to inform USAID/OFDA's strategic direction in the health sector.

The Decentralized Management in Post Conflict Transitions tool was shared with USAID/OFDA and BASICS hopes that it will be applied in Southern Sudan to inform project design and capacity building initiatives.

Click on the titles below to access reports and other materials developed during USAID/BASICS' support in Malawi

Title	Type	Description	Technical Focus Area(s)
<a href="#">Southern Sudan Post Conflict Transition Assessment Report: Trip Report One</a>	Trip Report	Report outlining development of the Facility Transition Database, Post Conflict Transition Assessment methodology, findings from the central level, and recommendations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fragile States</li> <li>• Humanitarian Conflict</li> <li>• Health Systems</li> </ul>
<a href="#">Southern Sudan Post Conflict Transition Assessment Report: Trip Report Two</a>	Trip Report	Report outlining findings from the Transition Assessment at the state and county levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fragile States</li> <li>• Humanitarian Conflict</li> <li>• Health Systems</li> </ul>
<a href="#">Health Sector Relief to Development Funding Gap Analysis: Southern Sudan</a>	Assessment Report	Details of the development of the Facility Transition Database and analysis and findings from data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fragile States</li> <li>• Humanitarian Conflict</li> <li>• Health Systems</li> </ul>
<a href="#">Health Transition Gap in Southern Sudan March 2008</a>	Presentation	An overview of the Facility Transition Database, including maps that were created to portray the Southern Sudan health sector in March 2008 and the transition funding gap.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fragile States</li> <li>• Humanitarian Conflict</li> <li>• Health Systems</li> </ul>
<a href="#">Transition Workshop Concept Paper</a>	Concept Paper	Recommendations for a Transition Workshop in Southern Sudan to develop a national health sector implementation plan to guide the relief to development transition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fragile States</li> <li>• Humanitarian Conflict</li> <li>• Health Systems</li> </ul>
<a href="#">Transition Framework</a>	Presentation	Transition Framework that USAID/BASICS developed to depict the relief to development transition in post conflict countries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fragile States</li> <li>• Humanitarian Conflict</li> <li>• Health Systems</li> </ul>

Title	Type	Description	Technical Focus Area(s)
<a href="#">Decentralized Management in Post Conflict Transitions Assessment Tool Narrative</a>	Assessment tool narrative description	Description of the background, framework and methodology of Decentralized Management in Post Conflict Transitions Assessment Tool.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fragile States</li> <li>• Humanitarian Conflict</li> <li>• Health Systems</li> </ul>
<a href="#">Decentralized Management in Post Conflict Transition Assessment Tool</a>	Assessment Tool	Assessment tool containing four components: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Relief to Development Transition Stage Questionnaire</li> <li>2. Decentralized Management Structured Interview</li> <li>3. Guided Discussion Questions</li> <li>4. Document Review Checklist</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fragile States</li> <li>• Humanitarian Conflict</li> <li>• Health Systems</li> </ul>