

**July 9-10, 2018**

**Washington, DC**



## **Workshop on the Flagship Learning Program for the Next Decade Summary for Dissemination**

### **About the Workshop**

USAID's Health Finance and Governance (HFG) project, in partnership with the World Bank, organized a Workshop on the Flagship Learning Program for the Next Decade in Washington, DC, on July 9-10, 2018. This meeting marked an important milestone in twenty years of delivering the Flagship Course on Health System Strengthening and Sustainable Financing. The workshop provided a unique space for instructors, sponsors, and other thought leaders to reflect on two decades of experience delivering the Flagship Course.

The workshop resulted in a productive set of discussions and proposals to revise the Flagship Learning Program moving forward. It also provided a valuable opportunity for sharing the history of the course's development with the younger generation of course instructors.

### **Workshop Objectives**

The objectives of the workshop were to reflect on two decades of experience delivering the Flagship Course; establish momentum and support to revise the Flagship Learning Program for the next decade; and propose input into creating an implementation plan for revising the Flagship Learning Program for the future.

The workshop began with remarks by the chair of the workshop, Professor Michael R. Reich from the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, and representatives of the two co-sponsors for the meeting: Tim Evans, Senior Director of Health, Nutrition, and Population at the World Bank, and Kelly Saldana, Director of USAID's Office of Health Systems. These remarks set the scene for discussions on the current Flagship Courses, recognizing their heterogeneity, and including challenges and ideas to strengthen the Flagship Learning Program.

Over two days, 33 attendees (see Annex A) engaged in discussions about what has worked and what has not worked; proposed revisions to the learning program; and explored what is needed to ensure the program's sustainability. Focused discussions on specific sessions from the course resulted in the identification of areas for improvement in analytical methods, teaching objectives, and teaching methods including cases.

The workshop did not seek to achieve consensus on the needs of the Flagship Learning Program moving forward, but rather sought to provide a space for reflection and discussion. The proposals listed below will need further discussion, but they serve as starting points to inform a roadmap for updating and strengthening the Flagship Learning Program.

## Reflections and Proposals for the Flagship Learning Program

There was broad agreement among workshop attendees that the Flagship Course continues to be a valuable capacity-building and knowledge-transfer mechanism for health system actors. The Flagship Learning Program has continued for two decades reaching over 20,000 course participants and remains highly demanded by national governments and donor agencies. The initial title was “The Flagship Course on Health Sector Reform and Sustainable Financing,” with a global course typically delivered in Washington, DC, and regional and country-specific courses held around the world. The Flagship Course materials have been continually revised and adapted at the country and regional levels and used by different agencies, and stakeholders appreciate the flexibility of the course. Workshop attendees recommended additional efforts to create an easily accessible library of course materials, enhanced coordination among instructors and sponsoring agencies, and developing methods for adapting the global course to regional and national contexts.

Many workshop attendees underlined the importance of maintaining the Flagship Course as non-ideological and as seeking to help countries to achieve their policy objectives. A hallmark of the Flagship Course is that participants learn how to think critically and strategically about how to strengthen health systems and enhance their performance. The Flagship Learning Program gives participants a common language and a way to organize their thinking, starting with identifying a problem and conducting a diagnosis rather than starting with a proposed policy solution. Workshop attendees agreed that the Flagship Learning Program’s language needs to be updated to reflect current terminology and thinking about health systems strengthening.

Attendees agreed that the analytical framework and the flagship approach remain largely valid, and that the orientation of the control knobs towards action is a strong element of the approach. Attendees expressed the need for thinking about how to bring the different control knobs together as policy variables connected to produce certain desired outcomes and how to facilitate the translation of ideas into action by mapping the control knobs to organizational structures within countries.

A key insight from the workshop was that the Flagship Learning Program has created a global Flagship community. Attendees emphasized the value of having a community that cares deeply about advancing the health systems field and carrying forward the Flagship Learning Program. Course founders who were present at the

workshop shared stories about the history of the course’s development and the theoretical underpinnings of the framework with the younger generation of instructors.

This exchange created a unique opportunity to support the generational transition of the course faculty.

A recurrent question in the workshop was whether the health reform needs of countries have changed. While workshop attendees agreed that no single learning program can serve the needs of all countries, they agreed on the course’s emphasis on the ethical and political dimensions of reform processes and suggested that these themes be integrated throughout the courses. Additionally, the group discussed the need to integrate an emphasis on equity in health system performance throughout the curriculum. Attendees also identified some specific gaps in the current program. The Flagship Learning Program could be better adapted to serve the needs of countries in transition and countries in crisis. Workshop attendees highlighted the importance of adapting the Flagship Learning Program to a country’s stage of development. They widely recognized the need to address the challenges of implementation in strengthening health systems. This then raised the question about the purpose of the course and the target audience. While the Flagship Course was originally designed for policy makers and policy analysts, attendees recognized the need to balance design and implementation moving forward. However, questions about the right balance between the “what” and the “how”, and about how to teach implementation remain open for discussion.

Attendees discussed the challenges of getting the right people to attend the course, and the advantages and disadvantages of mixed audiences, in terms of course participants’ levels and the organizations they represent. They agreed on the importance of including course participants from outside the health sector to facilitate communication and collaboration across sectors. Similarly, they acknowledged the need to expand the diversity of Flagship course instructors in terms of disciplines, gender, institutions, and nationality. Workshop attendees exchanged ideas about how to engage with course participants after the course. They also discussed establishing an alumni network. They identified a need for sharing information about follow-up courses with course participants, and highlighted linking the Flagship Course to other regional and country-level activities related to health system performance.

Workshop attendees and course participants have often identified that the amount of time dedicated to learning within the course is not sufficient. They highlighted the

opportunity that technology offers to improve the delivery of the content. The use of e-learning is a potential strategy to make more efficient use of in-class time by teaching core concepts online or by having topic-specific follow-ups. Attendees also discussed the need to strengthen the pedagogic guidance for faculty of the Flagship Course; this may include resources such as teaching notes and/or training junior faculty to hone their pedagogical skills. While there is also a need to develop more teaching cases, this is a difficult challenge and will require additional resources and a concerted effort from Flagship faculty.

There was broad agreement among workshop attendees that updating the Flagship Learning Program will require time, resources, and multiple stakeholders, and that this workshop was just the first phase of a longer-term consultative process. Attendees emphasized the need for better coordination among different institutions affiliated with the Flagship Course, including efforts to inform others about courses being organized, share the contents of courses held, and jointly develop new materials for teaching. Workshop attendees also noted that future efforts to revise the Flagship curriculum should consider input from past course participants. Course evaluations completed by participants during courses have informed discussions about updating the Flagship Learning Program; however, workshop attendees recognized that better ways to capture the voices and views of course participants are critical. For example, it would be useful to solicit alumni feedback to assess how the Flagship Course affected participants' ability to design and implement reforms that strengthen health system performance.

This workshop served as a platform to convene for the first time in two decades course instructors, sponsors and thought leaders from organizations affiliated with the Flagship Learning Program to reflect on and build momentum to revise this critical capacity-building mechanism for the next decade. The process of revising the Flagship Learning Program and raising the financial resources needed remain as important topics for further discussion.

For next steps, USAID's Health Finance and Governance (HFG) project has agreed to sponsor a few follow-up activities (before the end of September 2018) to help move forward the process of updating and strengthening the Flagship Learning Program. Those activities include drafts of: (1) a background paper and updated teaching materials on regulation and purchasing; (2) a background report that summarizes current thinking on implementation politics and includes recommendations for updating this content in the Flagship Course curriculum; (3) a Course Director Guide for Organizing a Flagship Course; (4) background

paper and updated teaching materials on noncommunicable diseases, reflecting the Asia regional context; (5) course materials on access to noncommunicable disease medicines; and (6) a glossary of Flagship terminology.

### Appendix A: Workshop Attendees List, Washington, DC | July 9-10, 2018

Ricardo Bitran	Bitran Associates
Veronika Wirtz	Boston University
Diana Bowser	Brandeis University
Peter Berman	Harvard University
Tom Bossert	Harvard University (virtual)
Paola Abril Campos	Harvard University
Bill Hsiao	Harvard University
Michael Reich	Harvard University
Winnie Yip	Harvard University
Octavio Gómez-Dantés	Instituto Nacional de Salud Pública, Mexico
Ravi Rannan-Eliya	Asia-Pacific Network for Health Systems Strengthening
Logan Brenzel	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
Gargee Ghosh	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
Prashant Yadav	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
Jhoney Barcarolo	GAVI
David Scheerer	GIZ
Michael Borowitz	Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB, and Malaria
Claudia Vivas	UNICEF
Bob Emrey	USAID-OHS
Jean-Jacques Frere	USAID-Asia
Ishrat Husain	USAID-Africa
Kelly Saldana	USAID-OHS
Sweta Saxena	USAID-Asia
Susan Sparkes	WHO
Cheryl Cashin	HFG
Abdo Yazbeck	HFG
Jeanna Holtz	HFG
Rachel Rosen	HFG
Mickey Chopra	World Bank
Tim Evans	World Bank (virtual)
Michele Gragnolati	World Bank
Nedim Jaganjac	World Bank
Rekha Menon	World Bank
Fadia Saadah	World Bank
Meera Shaker	World Bank
Ellen Van de Poel	World Bank, GFF
David Wilson	World Bank (virtual)