

Peer Learning Platform for Gavi Transitioning Countries

Membership Briefing Document

The Peer Learning Platform for Gavi Transitioning Countries is a new initiative supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Gavi that will launch in mid-2017, with Results for Development (R4D) as the Platform Coordinator. The Platform aims to improve the likelihood of successful Gavi transition by bringing transitioning countries and partners together to jointly learn and solve transition-related financing and programmatic challenges.

Background

As countries transition away from Gavi support towards fully self-financing their immunization programs, there must be a focus on ensuring financial and programmatic sustainability through early and collaborative transition planning. Strong country capacity for budget planning, execution, and monitoring, at all levels, is inherent to financial sustainability, while strong country health systems will form the basis for successful programmatic transition and sustained coverage. Gavi partners currently help prepare countries for Gavi transition by supporting the development and implementation of transition plans. However, partners more commonly provide this support bilaterally, rather than through collective engagement. Furthermore, not all transitioning countries have plans, and countries currently do not have a mechanism to learn from each other's experiences during this process.

An opportunity exists to build country-to-country peer learning into the current approach to Gavi transition. Information sharing across countries and partners could be increased through a platform that encourages peer learning and engagement on practical experiences. Additionally, positive peer support could be used where countries lack strategic plans, or where plan development and implementation of plans has lagged. Lastly, strategies and tools for increasing prioritization of immunization and improving weak processes (e.g. planning, budgeting, and disbursement) could be developed through a peer learning platform.

Vision for the Platform

The ultimate goal of this Platform is to contribute to the achievement of the Gavi goals for improved sustainability of national immunization programs. The more near-term goal is that participating countries will have increased opportunities to engage on transition issues and increased access to resources to solve transition-related challenges. This will reduce the chance that vaccines will be dropped after a country transitions away from Gavi support, increase the chance that coverage will be maintained or increased, and ensure that countries have the skills and ability to introduce new vaccines in the future.

Engagement Model

The principles of engagement for this platform are centered around a vision of collaborative momentum for action and improvement. The platform aims to be:

- Catalytic: Adding value beyond current structures for country support
- Action oriented: Engagements involve the right people with the right expertise to drive change
- Practical, timely: Country engagement is secured by providing tangible solutions to immediate needs

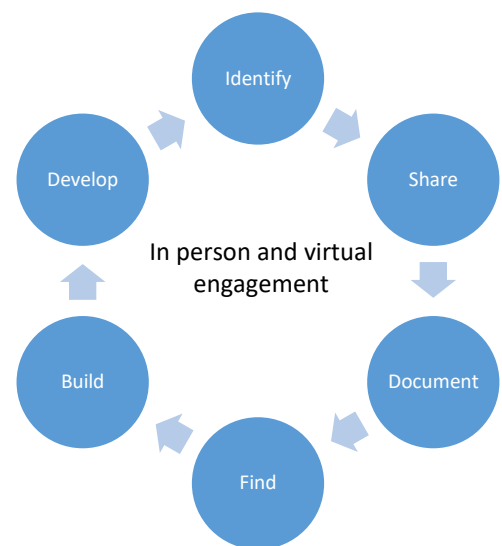
- Demand-driven: Countries help drive direction and focus of platform's work
- Integrated, collaborative: Country representatives have ability to make changes and have links with interagency coordination bodies/partners

The theory of successful peer learning is centered on a process that starts with the identification of a relatively specific technical challenge that is common among participating countries. One example of a technical topic that has been addressed through a similar Joint Learning Platform, the Joint Learning Network (JLN) for UHC¹, is the costing of health services for provider payment. Through the JLN, a group of seven member countries articulated a pressing need in this area, formed a technical initiative that allowed them to share experiences and identify gaps in their collective understanding, and, over the course of a year, developed a practical Costing Manual based on country costing challenges, trade-offs, and solutions.

This is the type of model we will support within the context of transition from Gavi support. The Country Launch meeting in May is the first step in this process and will have the objective of identifying one or two specific technical topics that can then be taken forward by the relevant countries for more focused engagement. Throughout the course of their engagement, members will work with technical facilitation teams to extract tacit knowledge around this topic, document and synthesize it, and develop practical country-specific knowledge products.

Knowledge co-production process²

1. Identify a common technical challenge and the underlying contextual conditions
2. Share experiences and strategies practitioners in different contexts have used to address this challenge
3. Document country experience using a standardized approach
4. Find gaps in the knowledge
5. Build common solutions that can be adapted and implemented in different contexts
6. Develop a shared vision and roadmap for filling knowledge gaps



Collaborative Design

In addition to the full-country launch meeting, the Platform will use a combination of small, technical in-person meetings, study tours, and an online members' platform to collectively engage country teams and partners on topics that support successful transition from Gavi support.

¹ <http://www.jointlearningnetwork.org/>

² <http://fiveyears.jointlearningnetwork.org/>

In-Person Meetings

The in-person meetings will be opportunities for country teams to present ongoing transition-relevant work in their countries, discuss challenges with other countries who are working on similar issues, and identify technical topics to be taken forward as focused technical initiatives. The in-person meetings will be facilitated by experts in the topics of relevance. The in-person meetings will be 2-3 days in length, depending on the complexity of the issues and volume of country-level work to be presented. The frequency of the meetings will be determined by country demand, but it is anticipated that there will be about two meetings per year.

Online Members Portal

The online discussion board and virtual home for the Platform will provide countries the opportunity to receive real-time support and suggestions to address specific challenges that arise during their work. The members' platform is also a place where information and tools can be shared.

The discussion board will be moderated by the collaborative facilitators, but it is anticipated that the majority of the content will be generated by country experts. Key themes that emerge on the discussion board will shape the focus of future in-person meetings.

Expected Outputs and Outcomes

The Peer Learning Platform is intended to serve as an ongoing engagement mechanism for countries and partners. The specific products that the Platform will produce will be decided by participants themselves. However, possible outcomes for participating countries and stakeholders include:

- For countries that are nearing Gavi's eligibility threshold:
 - Higher quality plans for transition developed earlier in the process
 - Ability to identify critical activities for transition
 - Application of lessons learned from experienced countries
 - Increased skills for engagement, planning, budgeting, and problem-solving
 - Increased ability to address barriers and solve roadblocks to successful transition
- For countries that have crossed Gavi's eligibility threshold:
 - Application of lessons learned from experienced countries
 - Support for implementing transition plans
 - Increased skills for engagement, planning, budgeting, and problem-solving
 - Increased ability to address barriers and solve roadblocks to successful transition
- For Development Partners:
 - Dynamic engagement of partners at all levels

Membership Information

Membership status for the Platform is intertwined with Gavi transition status, and is expected to change as countries move through the transition process. Initially, countries will be invited to participate in the platform on a time- and resource-intensive basis for approximately three years. Countries that successfully complete the transition process may leave the platform or re-engage as resource countries. Resource countries, those that are fully or close to transitioned (by time of launch) *and* can share useful experiences, will have less intensive participation.

What does the Country commit to?

As part of the Peer Learning Platform, each member country will designate 3-4 representatives who are leaders in immunization financing, immunization policy and planning, and/or research and data analytics to:

- Regularly and actively engage in virtual and in-person Platform meetings. In-person meetings in 2017 will be held in May 2017 and tentatively August/ September 2017 (to be confirmed).
- Actively engage to help define the direction of the Platform to focus on the most pressing issues facing transitioning countries;
- Present and discuss country experience during virtual and in-person meetings; providing feedback on proposed approaches and tools; and contributing to the success of engagements by doing necessary pre-meeting work.
- Contribute examples and experiences and technical inputs to any tools that are co-produced.

Benefits of Membership

- In-person engagements: Through a platform-wide launch meeting and subsequent regional meetings, the Platform will convene country participants and facilitate opportunities to share transition plans, present experiences with transition plan development or implementation, jointly work through challenges, and co-develop knowledge products. Initial platform engagements will focus on transition plans, and the identification of the first technical topics to be taken forward as smaller technical initiatives. As the platform develops, members will be encouraged to propose new technical initiatives of interest.
- Up-to-date database of transition-related knowledge and tools: Updated information on existing and emerging knowledge relevant to priority transition topics will be hosted and managed on the public side of the Platform's website. Additionally, the Platform Coordinator and supporting Regional Institutions will synthesize and make accessible new knowledge and tacit country experience gleaned from platform engagements.
- Members-only web portal: Platform members will have full access to the Platform's website, including a password-protected, members-only portal with virtual engagement functions, such as webinars, message boards, and chat boxes. In this way, peer learning can happen in real time, with direct communication to other countries that are going through Gavi transition or that have successfully transitioned from Gavi support in recent years. Through the portal, countries can share, for example, work in progress on planning and processes, strategic plans, data analytics, as well as sample tools and templates that other countries can adapt and use.
- Tailored technical support: The Platform Coordinator and Regional Institutions will adapt existing transition knowledge/tools to specific country contexts for platform members. If platform members need technical assistance, the Platform Coordinator can connect them with the appropriate Development Partner(s).
- Leadership in the field: Contribute to the global evidence base on using data in practical ways to improve transition processes and to the development of tools based on platform country experience.