

Analysis of the Effectiveness of the Accelerator's Coaching Approach to Strengthen Universal Health Coverage in Togo

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CONTEXT

To ensure access to high-quality healthcare services for its population, the Togolese government is committed to achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) by 2030. UHC is embedded in several national policies including Togo's National Health Policy, the National Health Development Plan, and its roadmap for 2020-2025 to ensure basic services for all. Led by the Ministry of Health and Public Hygiene in collaboration with other ministries, the Accelerator initiated a multisectoral co-creation process in 2020. This aimed to identify and prioritize barriers to UHC in Togo, foster cooperation among stakeholders, propose evidence-based solutions, and develop actions to accelerate UHC implementation effectively.

OVERVIEW: COACHING APPROACH

Over the years, there have been various initiatives to reconsider traditional technical assistance models and find more effective ways to support country-led change efforts. National stakeholders express a desire to lead their programs and develop solutions to complex health system challenges while receiving support to navigate change processes. They seek access to strong local and regional expertise, complemented by global knowledge and peer experience, adaptable to their specific contexts. The Accelerator's coaching approach meets these expectations by emphasizing and facilitating a robust, country-led process. It leverages existing infrastructure and processes rather than creating parallel systems and utilizes national and regional experts with external coaches' support as needed.

LEARNINGS

National stakeholders at the center of UHC reforms

The Accelerator organized a co-creation session with key UHC stakeholders, including health officials and civil society. This inclusive process ensured diverse perspectives were considered, leading to a comprehensive UHC plan well-aligned with Togo's roadmap. Neutral facilitation by the Accelerator helped stakeholders overcome obstacles and reach a consensus, ensuring the plan received the broad support and legitimacy essential for successful implementation.

Multistakeholder collaboration

The Accelerator's coaching approach played a crucial role in promoting stronger, closer collaboration for UHC, according to local stakeholders. The participatory development of the integrated plan fostered greater stakeholder inclusion among government officials, civil society, and other relevant groups. This inclusive process created a sense of collective ownership, enhancing commitment to the plan's implementation. It also facilitated essential interactions and idea exchanges, breaking down silos and promoting a holistic approach to UHC. Improved transparency, open communication, and mutual respect fostered better relationships and more effective collaboration, leading to tangible progress toward UHC goals.

Strengthening of health accountability mechanisms

According to national stakeholders, the Accelerator's coaching approach led to strengthened accountability mechanisms for UHC. Key factors included adopting a common accountability strategy and involving civil society in co-creation workshops and monitoring mechanisms. This direct involvement ensured state commitments to UHC were met and fostered collective responsibility. Stakeholders identified gaps and challenges together, enhancing transparency. Additionally, the Accelerator promoted downward accountability through regular multi-level consultations, improving communication and reducing bureaucratic barriers. Active monitoring by health and political authorities further reinforced accountability within the project and the broader health system.

Journey to self-reliance

The Accelerator played a crucial role in empowering Togo through its coaching approach. Thematic learning sessions helped stakeholders develop technical skills, such as data analysis, to address issues like delayed reimbursements for healthcare providers under the Wezou program. This increased autonomy has enabled national actors to perform similar analyses independently, enhancing informed decision-making. Additionally, the project conducted a cost study to provide information on extending free family planning for postpartum women and adolescents, supporting political decision-making and advocacy for sustainable national funding. Using locally generated data, Togo can now design new interventions to optimize its health system's performance, reinforcing national capacities and decision-making autonomy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. From the stakeholders' perspective, it's crucial to consolidate the achievements of the project by documenting and sharing experiences and challenges encountered since co-creation. This approach not only capitalizes on lessons learned but also fosters constructive exchange among diverse stakeholders. Facilitating this knowledge exchange globally enriches practices and enhances understanding of effective approaches to promote UHC.
2. Simultaneously, it has been emphasized that establishing a strategy for UHC ownership by all stakeholders is essential. This involves actively engaging government authorities, healthcare providers, civil society, and local communities in the process. By raising awareness among these stakeholders about the importance of UHC and their critical roles in its achievement, ongoing commitment and shared responsibility in promoting universal access to quality health services can be ensured.
3. This collective ownership of UHC will create sustained momentum towards achieving this ambitious goal. By encouraging active participation from all stakeholders, UHC can become a national priority and receive continuous long-term support. This will also strengthen relationships within the health sector and promote effective collaboration in implementing health policies and programs.