International Cooperation in the Philippines: Challenges and Prospects

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the Philippine Department of Health’s Sector-Wide Approach (SWAP) articulated in 2007

- an approach where the DOH takes the lead in coordinating and managing donor support and aligning these with government priorities towards full implementation of a sector program
- aimed at improving the quality and efficiency of mobilizing and utilizing foreign investments, and harmonizing the same with national and local investments to ensure sustainability of reforms
- stakeholders and partners are encouraged to use common approaches, such as a common expenditure framework, monitoring and evaluation framework, harmonized technical assistance (TA) processes, and coordination of available resources
What does cooperation mean to the level of effort for nutrition?

• Able to work with less effort but reach wider scale on social mobilization
• Allow for nutrition to be surfaced in the MCH agenda
• Allow for better understanding of the nutrition-health continuum
• Enable the nutrition services/messages to be integrated with health services/messages
• Allow for mobilizing more and leveraging resources for nutrition
Challenges in Cooperation

- SDAH agreements and convergence at the national level should be mirrored at the local level
  - Development partners/NGOs should be committed to go through the bureaucracy system and understand the country’s situation and policies
  - Bureaucracy should be able to streamline processes
  - Local government units (LGUs) are devolved; LGUs differ from one another in terms of capabilities, resources, etc.
    - Consider political interplay and cultural sensitivities
    - Rethink assistance and mechanisms for delivery to areas with weak governance but really needs assistance; so there will be no creation of a parallel system

- Project-based interventions have different timetable with institution-based changes. Projects:
  - life/funding is short term but problems/needs are chronic
  - tend to go for outputs without changing capabilities of the actors
  - more concerned with deliverables than the process of attaining the deliverables and local ownership
Challenges in Cooperation

- Most projects do not have funds for collection of baseline data, and LGUs do not have data for nutrition indicators, except for weight
  - Difficulty in advocacy
  - No or weak evaluation
- Projects need to identify their niches and harmonize their assessment, planning, monitoring and reporting and tools, including population statistics used, definition of terms, etc.
- Need for a pro-active stance in seeking out other stakeholders, particularly those from the private sector, academe and community-based organizations
Prospects in Cooperation

- The recent years are characterized with
  - less donor driven and less fragmented activities
  - more discussions among development partners, by themselves, and with DOH/CHDs, and more unified action
  - Even with decentralization, the national government is able to leverage resources of LGUs to address local priorities
- Development partners and NGOs start to have a common goal and direction
  - focus
- With current initiatives, international cooperation will very likely raise the level of progress of nutritional outcomes in the country