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SHOPS
Strengthening Health Outcomes *through* the Private Sector

ASSESSMENT to ACTION

A Guide to Conducting Private Health Sector Assessments in Developing Countries

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Abt Associates

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Abt Associates leads the project in collaboration with
Banyan Global
Jhpiego
Marie Stopes International
Monitor Group
O'Hanlon Health Consulting

Origins of *Assessment to Action*

- Address growing demand
- Document our approach
- Support ongoing learning
- Advance practice

Five Assessment Phases

User-friendly navigation through five assessment phases and detailed steps

Knowledge Assets

Resource documents provide examples, templates, and detailed guidance

- Interview guides organized by major stakeholders
- Example scopes of work, report outlines, graphs
- Tips on conducting analysis, presenting findings, and formulating recommendations
- Team member roles and responsibilities

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Welcome to the *SHOPS Assessment to Action* website. Assessment to Action is a guide to conducting private


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ASSESSMENT

- Phase 1 Plan
  - Step 1: Draft Scope of Work
  - Step 2: Select the Assessment Team
  - Step 3: Identify and Engage Stakeholders
  - Step 4: Finalize Scope of Work
- Phase 2 Learn
- Phase 3 Analyze
- Phase 4 Share
- Phase 5 Act

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The purpose of the planning phase is to design and prepare for the assessment. Conducting an assessment is ty first stage of a larger effort to engage the private sector and raise awareness about its potential contribution to ad national health goals. As such, the **planning** phase is the first opportunity to reach out to stakeholders and build relationships. Your goal should be to get a sense of the key actors and local dynamics, begin to make connection identify ways to build support for the **action** phase.

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The first step of the planning process is to work with the donor to draft a scope of work. Drafting the scope of work with a series of conversations with the donor—and in some cases other local stakeholders—to shape the directio assessment, covering priorities, parameters, key stakeholders, potential challenges, and intended use of the findi

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Step 3: Identify and Engage Stakeholders

Stakeholders representing both the private and public health sectors are integral to the assessment. The level of stakeholder involvement may range from minimal to extensive, often as a function of assessment objectives, time f available budget. At a minimum, stakeholders participate as key informants, sharing their perspectives, insights, a concerns about the private health sector. As the assessment process has evolved, local stakeholders have playe greater role, ranging from providing input and direction to the assessment, to participating in fieldwork, and valida findings and helping to prioritize recommendations.

3.1 Team Discussion: Engagement Approach and Opportunities

Stakeholders represent organizations and individuals that have an interest in the health system. Discussing the te approach to engaging stakeholders, as well as engagement opportunities and activities, is a good way to get ever the same page regarding rationale and messaging. At this point it's good to remember that the entire assessment especially in-person interviews—provides multiple opportunities to engage stakeholders, raise awareness and dis about the private sector, and lay the foundation for follow-on actions.

Reaching out to stakeholders early on in the assessment process will:

- Facilitate fieldwork by building awareness and credibility (if people know what you're doing and why it's importa

- Lay the groundwork for local ownership of the assessment process and recommendations.

TIP ► Connecting with Ministry of Health officials early in the process will shed light on any required protocols or recommended practices. For instance, in some countries the team has had to secure approval from the Ministry of Health prior to starting fieldwork. Even when explicit approval is not required, some informants feel more comfortable being interviewed if they know the assessment has been condoned by the Ministry of Health. A sample letter used in Dominica is available as a resource.

3.2 Identify Key Stakeholders

Typical stakeholders include:

- USAID and other aid agencies or development partners
- Ministry of Health, other ministries (e.g., finance)
- Professional medical and pharmaceutical associations
- Owners of large private health facilities
- Private health practitioners
- NGOs engaged in health

Often the donor can provide insights as to which stakeholders you should reach out to, as well as introductions. Additional stakeholders will emerge from conversations with these individuals (similar to how a snowball sample functions).

RESOURCE ► As the first assessment to focus on HIV and AIDS, our experience in Namibia allowed us to identify new stakeholders in the HIV community and develop a more systematic approach to interviewing them. We developed clear objectives for interviewing each stakeholder group, and this helped to focus the assessment. This table summarizes Namibian stakeholders by sector and demonstrates their relationship to the focus areas of HIV and AIDS and/or orphans and vulnerable children.

3.3 Determine the Level of Stakeholder Engagement

Taking into account the assessment's objectives, budget, and time frame, consider the following when determining the level

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Interview Objectives by Stakeholder Group

Commercial Health Sector	
Interview Objectives	**Target Audiences**
• To learn if the private sector is aware of government strategies and long-term plans to address key health challenges • To measure willingness to work on public health issues • To identify possible barriers to partnering with the public sector and/or barriers to a greater role in public health areas • To measure openness to working with the public sector	• Directors of physician, pharmacist, nurse, and laboratory professional associations • Key private sector practitioners • Key private sector hospital and/or clinic owners • Key lab owners • Owners of pharmacy chains • Key leaders in the pharmaceutical sector • Owners/directors of pharmaceutical manufacturing companies • Owner/directors of health product distribution companies
Notprofit Health Sector	
Interview Objectives	**Target Audiences**
• To learn if the private sector is aware of government strategies and long-term plans to address key health challenges • To identify current partnerships with the private or public sector to address public health issues • To gauge receptivity to partner with the private commercial sector	• Faith-based organizations (FBOs) delivering health services (hospital and clinic directors) • FBOs delivering care and support • Faith-based umbrella organizations • Network of NGOs/FBOs delivering health services • Network of NGOs/FBOs delivering care and support • Directors of largest NGOs
Health Insurance Industry	
Interview Objectives	**Target Audiences**

Learn

The learning phase—especially the fieldwork step—is the cornerstone of the assessment process. Building on a comprehensive desk review, supported by secondary data analysis, the team synthesizes available information to further refine the approach and focus of in-country data collection. Fieldwork consists of interviews with local stakeholders, and site visits to address information gaps and gather insights and perceptions from multiple perspectives on the role of the private health sector. Before leaving the country, the team typically convenes a debriefing with key stakeholders, sharing preliminary findings and recommendations.

Information gathered in this phase should answer:

- What are pressing public health concerns in the country? How does the public health sector view the contributions of the private health sector?
- Who comprises the private health sector? What services do they provide and to whom?
- What are the main barriers to private sector expansion?

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Step 3: Conduct Field Work

With the field guide in hand, the team is ready to begin in-country data collection. Fieldwork is critical to verifying information, filling in gaps, and answering key questions about the private health sector.

This step involves:

- Key informant interviews with stakeholders from the public and private health sectors, including site visits
- Additional data collection, such as hard copy documents (gray literature) which may be available only in country
- Travel to other regions to ensure a balanced view of the private health sector
- Daily team debriefs to share notes and findings from interviews and site visits

Fieldwork is critical to verifying information, filling in gaps, and answering key questions:

- Who are the key actors in the private health sector?
- What specific health services and products are delivered by private providers? At what price?
- What population groups do they serve (gender, income, urban/rural, special groups)?
- How is the private health sector organized? What are the linkages with the overall health system?

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- What are the sources of private health expenditures?

TAKE NOTE ▶ Your team only gets ONE SHOT to carry out quality fieldwork. Missing a key stakeholder interview or failing to collect important data while in the field can undermine an assessment. Be meticulous about advance research and planning: identify informants, prepare interview guides, and establish a fieldwork schedule and a process for keeping it up to date (it will change). Interview as many stakeholders as possible and to capture diverse perspectives that you can use to triangulate findings—even if this means staying in country a little longer.

3.1 Key informant Interviews

Team members typically conduct stakeholder interviews related to their particular area of expertise, or to the technical area as assigned to them. (That said, you may be asked to conduct an interview or include questions for another team member.) Interviews serve three purposes:

Scheduling Interviews
The local logistics consultant, with direction from the team lead and assistance from the team coordinator, is responsible for developing and updating the consolidated interview schedule for all team members.

Begin developing the schedule two to four weeks in advance of the initiation of fieldwork. During fieldwork, the team coordinator and local logistics consultant must coordinate closely to ensure that available time is used efficiently for meetings.

Fieldwork requires flexibility. Meeting times frequently change, or ad hoc meetings may be arranged with little advance notice, so team members must be patient and adaptable. Depending on the size of the country, It is not unusual for a team to interview upwards of 100 individuals over a two-week period.

TIP ▶ Use a Google Calendar to organize the schedule, which shows informants by assigned team member(s), day and time, location, and informant contact information. Team members can access the calendar remotely to identify conflicts or make schedule changes to allow an additional member to attend a particular interview. The calendar can be color-coded by team member or subject matter, which can help ensure all technical areas are covered and make efficient use of each team member's time.

Preparing for and Conducting Interviews
Team members are responsible for formulating interview questions. To facilitate this process, we have provided common questions typically asked during an assessment by stakeholder group. These should serve as a starting point, but may need to be adapted according to the objectives of the assessment.

Begin interviews with a brief overview of the purpose of the assessment, the process, and the expected outputs, as well as an explanation as to why the informant was selected to participate. It is important to let the interviewees know how the information they provide will be used/represented in the report (e.g., will any information be attributed to an interviewee as an individual?). The team should review tips for conducting key informant interviews prior to fieldwork.

TIP ▶ Convene all team members for a fieldwork kickoff meeting on the day before you begin interviews. Typically held on a Sunday, this meeting should include introductions, a review of the field guide (assignments, key issues, and information gaps), expectations, guidance on conducting stakeholder interviews, and the most current schedule, as well as the process that will be used to keep it up to date.

- Private Sector Interviews
- Public Sector Interviews
- Site Visits

Stakeholder Questions

Asking the right questions is key to obtaining sufficient and sound information to inform the assessment and its findings. In this section we questions for each of the major stakeholder groups. While each assessment may have its unique line of questioning, this set of stakeholde represents those commonly included in an assessment, based on our collective experience. Stakeholders are grouped into the following ca

- **Health Providers**—direct service providers and suppliers of products and medicines
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Private health providers are the backbone of the private health sector, so visits to private health facilities, and interviews with owners and practitioners, are critical to a private sector assessment. This set of questions is intended for larger practices, primarily clinics and hospitals. Key informants typically include the owner of the facility, as well as one or more practitioners. The interview should capture information about health services offered and fees charged, provider and client characteristics, and business practices and constraints. View and download questions.

Individual Practitioners

In many countries, individual private practitioners make up the majority of private health facilities. These are typically solo practitioners operating out of a small clinic, or possibly a home office. This set of questions is intended for these owner/practitioners. The interview should capture information about health services offered and fees charged, provider and client characteristics, and business practices as well as constraints. View and download questions.

Labs and Diagnostic Centers

Private laboratories and diagnostic centers are an important aspect of the private health sector and are typically included in an assessment. Given the importance of testing and determining viral load for HIV, labs are particularly relevant for an HIV-focused assessment. Teams will want to identify existing labs and diagnostic centers and ascertain what services they offer, as well as understand their relationship with health providers (private and public), in terms of referrals and reporting requirements. View and download questions.

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Questions—Clinical

- What types of services do you offer? [Probe for specific health services and prices]
- How many clients do you see per day**?**
- What challenges or barriers do you face in delivering services to your clients? **[**Examples: payment, access to supplies, equipment, credit**]**What do you see as potential solutions to these challenges? **[PROBE**: licensing/registration, training, payment/reimbursement, etc.**]**
- Are you interested in expanding the services you provide, or volume of patients you see? In which ways? **[**Example: Inclusion of HIV/AIDS or family planning services**]**
- What are the barriers to expansion?
- Are private health providers able to access training comparable to the training available to public health workers?

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- What training do you see as lacking for private health providers?
- Where do you procure your supplies?
- Are you ever visited by medical detailers? If so, how often?
- Do you have any materials to share information with your clients? **[If so]** Where did you get those materials?
- Do you report any health service statistics to the Ministry of Health? If so, what information do you report and with what frequency?

Questions—Administrative/Business

- How long have you been in operation?
- How long did the registration process take?
- Are there ongoing requirements you must meet in order to maintain your practice?
- How did you finance your practice?
- What are your hours of operation? When are your busiest times?
- Are you a participating provider in any government or private coverage scheme?
- Has your facility ever been visited by the Ministry of Health? For what purpose?
- Do you currently have a need for financing? For what purpose? How likely is it that you will be approved for a loan?

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Questions – Practitioner Characteristics

- What is your degree?
- How many years have you been in practice?
- Have you received training since graduation?
- Have you received training recently? If so, who provided that training? (Ministry of Health? NGO? Other?) What was the content? Did you have to pay for it? How helpful was it?
- What training do you see as lacking for private health providers?
- If you have not attended a training recently, why not? [PROBE: none offered, inconvenient hours, inability to pay?]
- Do you belong to a professional association? If so, which one? Is it serving your needs?
- Do you also work for the public sector (i.e., dual practice)? [Explain dual practice – working in the public sector while also maintaining a private practice]If so, what are the hours you are present at this [private] facility?
- How common is dual practice?

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Analyze

A private sector assessment combines quantitative and qualitative methods to increase knowledge about the private health sector. In the analytic phase, the team organizes and examines information amassed to develop a clear understanding of the role of the private health sector. Following this step, the team undertakes further analysis to identify key issues, constraints, and potential solutions. The findings inform recommendations that balance opportunities for increased private sector engagement with the realities of context, political will, and available funding. The steps in this phase culminate in producing a draft report, which undergoes a quality assurance review before becoming the "master draft" that is sent to external reviewers and local stakeholders for validation and feedback.

Download Phase 3 Overview

Step 1: Analyze Data

In the learning phase, the preliminary analysis step lays the foundation for fieldwork. In this step, further analysis is made possible by additional information gathered during fieldwork. New information contributes to and validates—and in some cases challenges—what is known about the role of the private health sector. Triangulation, or examining data from various sources and viewpoints, underpins the process, and ensures the validity of the findings. This step culminates in analyzing available qualitative and quantitative data, and merging the results to derive key findings.

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As with any qualitative research, it's important to follow established best practices when conducting key informant interviews. In addition to gathering information from key informants, the interviews may also serve as site visits, affording the opportunity for team members to make observations pertinent to the assessment. For example, when visiting health facilities the team can observe patient characteristics and volume, wait time, and the existence of patient information/posters. These site visits also provide the opportunity for collecting brochures, gray literature, and products—such as contraceptives and condoms available in retail pharmacies.

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health sector. It may be helpful to visually map out all the private sector actors as part of this process. The team leader may have to step in to mitigate any biases on the part of team members.

1.4 Analyze

Private health sector assessments seek to identify facilitating, as well as limiting, factors affecting the private health sector. Ultimately, a private sector assessment seeks to answer the question: "How can the private health sector contribute to improved health status?" of a given population/in a given country.

As introduced in the Learn phase, teams typically analyze available data on health care provision and use of services, such as the data provided by DHS surveys. Teams may also acquire additional datasets while in country, such as provider or facility registries. These can be analyzed with software such as Stata, SPSS or SAS.

However, the majority of information collected as part of an assessment is qualitative in nature. While there are various methods for analyzing qualitative data, assessment teams typically use Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) or root cause analyses, or sometimes both. The chosen method should align with the specific objectives of the assessment, but ultimately is at the discretion of the team leader.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Analysis Teams often employ a SWOT analysis to identify key issues related to the private health sector, as this method flows easily from the organization and triangulation tasks. Identifying strengths and weaknesses is the first step of a SWOT analysis. When applied to a PSA, a SWOT analysis identifies strengths and weaknesses that are internal to the private health sector, and opportunities and threats from the external environment. This approach could be implemented for each specific aspect of the private health sector, such as service delivery, or applied more broadly to the overall findings on the private health sector. Teams have had success applying the methodology both ways.

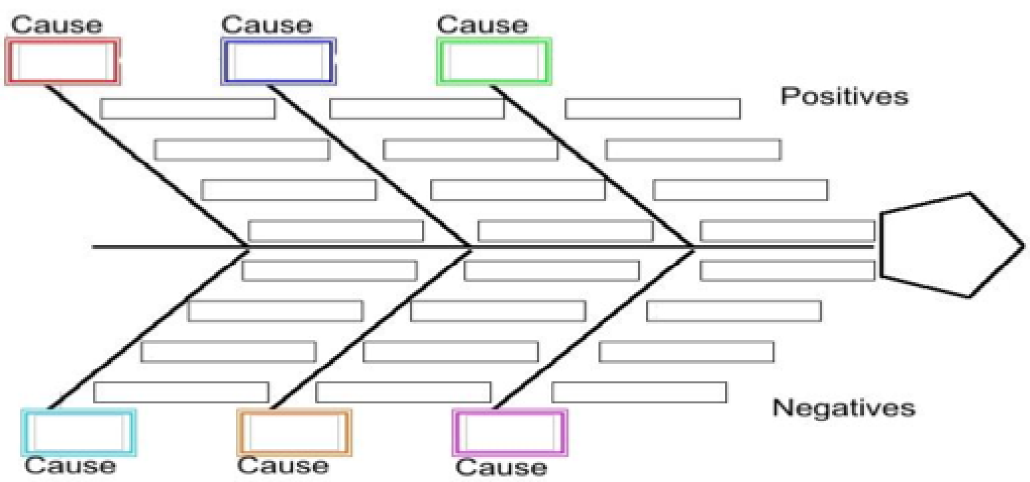
Root Cause Analysis Teams often use a root cause analytical approach to understand the causes of key findings. A root cause analysis helps generate hypotheses about the underlying causes of problems and how they relate to one another; it also helps to broaden one's thinking to look beyond a single "cause." Root causes are best defined as manageable problems that can be addressed through specific interventions. For example, high import taxes on medical products and drugs may be a root cause, whereas unemployment is not. There are many techniques for performing root cause analysis, including a "cause and effect" or "fishbone" diagram. The objective of this exercise is to fully explore ***all*** the possible causes *impeding* or *facilitating* the private health sector in playing a role to address key health priorities, and prioritizing them to derive actionable recommendations. Root cause analysis can be conducted on its own, or following a SWOT exercise. In the latter scenario, team members are instructed to think through the **underlying causes** of the SWOT

Root Cause Analysis

Root cause analysis is a method of problem solving that tries to identify the root causes of problems. The approach aims to solve problems by attempting to identify and correct the root causes of events, as opposed to simply addressing their symptoms. A complete root cause analysis consists of:

- A clear definition of the issue or problem
- A thorough analysis supported by evidence
- A specific action plan for implementing the solutions

A fishbone diagram is often used to show the relationship between different causes (bones) and the effect of interest (the head).



Applying root cause analysis to a private health sector assessment

Employing a root cause analytic approach supports the dual objectives of identifying not only

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RESOURCES - PHASE 2 LEARN

RESOURCES - PHASE 3 ANALYZE

RESOURCES - PHASE 4 SHARE

RESOURCES - PHASE 5 ACT

Resources

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- Antigua and Barbuda Health System and Private Sector Assessment
- Bangladesh Private Sector Assessment of Long Acting and Permanent Family Plannir Contraceptives
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- Grenada Health Systems and Private Sector Assessment
- Ivory Coast Private Health Sector Assessment
- Malawi Private Health Sector Assessment
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- Saint Kitts and Nevis Health Systems and Private Sector Assessment 2011
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