

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU)

Implementing Best Practice Consortium

Since mid-1999, WHO and a group of twelve partner agencies have championed an initiative to facilitate the introduction, adaptation and utilization of best practices in reproductive health care programmes throughout the world. Known as the Implementing Best Practices (IBP) Initiative, it was developed after a detailed review of the literature and an analysis of lessons learnt from past experience of developing strategies aimed at improving access to and quality of reproductive health programmes. The feedback received from international, regional and country programme managers regarding this initiative has been encouraging. The lessons learnt from introducing the IBP Initiative into countries has enabled the partner agencies to improve the approach used and to strengthen interventions, such as developing a programme of mentorship and supportive follow-up for country teams applying the IBP Initiative.

For the last two years, the agencies involved in the IBP Initiative have worked on an informal cost-sharing basis. In mid 2001, the agencies agreed to formalize this arrangement and form the *Implementing Best Practice Consortium* with a view to promoting the IBP Initiative, fostering broader participation and acting as a catalyst for action at regional and country levels. Activities of the Consortium will focus on developing further the IBP Initiative and taking to scale the collaborative strategies that support the introduction and use of evidence-based best practices in specific countries to improve access to and quality of reproductive health care.

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is to formalise the establishment of the *Implementing Best Practice Consortium (the IBP Consortium)*, and to lay down its goals, objectives, guiding principles, membership, operating guidelines and other processes.

In becoming members of *the IBP Consortium*, the signatories of the MOU agree that they will endeavour to achieve the following shared goal and objectives, in accordance with the guiding principles and their broader programmes of work, within the limitations of available funding, and in keeping with their individual policies and regulations.

1 The IBP Consortium

Members of the IBP Consortium will work at the international, regional and country levels to promote the dissemination, adaptation and utilization of the latest evidence-based concepts and best practices in reproductive health. Over time, the membership is expected to expand to include a wide variety of stakeholders from country programmes in both developing and developed countries.

2 Goal

Improve access to, and quality of, reproductive health care through a systematic approach to developing and supporting strategies to introduce, adapt and apply evidence-based best practices in reproductive health.

3 Guiding Principles

- Demonstrate a dynamic model of international cooperation among major organizations that minimizes duplication of effort, maximizes the use of resources, and promotes rapid adoption of proven best strategies and practices.

- Respect the diversity of circumstances in individual countries and work collaboratively with other members of the Consortium and local colleagues to introduce and support the implementation of culturally appropriate IBP strategies.
- Develop a style of interaction among the IBP member organizations characterized by open communication, responsiveness and good will.
- Agree to share both the credit and responsibility for the material and publications produced under the MOU. The partners will mutually agree on and assign responsibility for developing and producing specific materials. The partners will have equal access to the materials and may reproduce or adapt them for non-profit purposes.
- Agree to acknowledge each other for contribution of work under this MOU in any advertising, publicity, publications or other information dissemination, subject to prior consultation and agreement on a case-by-case basis.

4 Objectives

The objectives of The IBP Consortium members shall be:

1. To create by January 2003 and sustain for at least two years an effective network of collaborating international and national groups to identify, disseminate, and apply evidence-based best practices in reproductive health.
2. To recommend and provide evidence-based tools and approaches that will help support a process of change within countries.
3. To work with countries to develop a transferable process that fosters innovation, shared learning and information exchange for the management and application of new and existing principles in reproductive health.
4. To build on existing management and leadership skills at all levels to enable the application of innovative and creative approaches to introduce and use best practices in reproductive health.
5. To support a process of continuous learning to implement best practices through mentorship and follow-up of IBP teams.
6. To use a variety of different media to support the collation, dissemination and utilization of evidence-based information, materials and tools.
7. To monitor the impact of the IBP Initiative, develop case studies and respond to lessons learnt.

5 Organizational Arrangement for the IBP Consortium

1. All members of the IBP Consortium will designate staff members to participate in the IBP Co-ordinating Committee responsible for the development and implementation of the IBP programme of work. Members of the IBP Co-ordinating Committee will work in Task Teams assigned to undertake specific time-bound activities that contribute to the achievement of the IBP programme of work.
2. This MOU in no way obligates any member to any financial commitment. The IBP Consortium members will jointly support the work as identified in the annual programme of work, the MOU and Operating Guidelines, which form an integral part of the MOU.

3. For the duration of this initial MOU the Chair of the IBP Co-ordinating Committee will be a “Founding Member” of the IBP Consortium and rotate in alphabetical order annually. The Chair of the IBP Co-ordinating Committee will be responsible for:
 - Convening and reporting on biannual IBP Co-ordinating Committee meetings to IBP Consortium Heads of Agencies and other relevant bodies.
 - Providing an annual technical and financial report on the activities of the IBP Consortium.
4. New members will be welcome to join the IBP Consortium and function according to the MOU and Operating Guidelines during this initial twoyear period of operation. They will not, however, be eligible to Chair the Co-ordinating Committee.
5. The World Health Organization, through its Department of Reproductive Health and Research, (WHO/RHR) will provide the IBP Consortium with secretariat services for the duration of the MOU, which covers an initial period of two years. Six months before the end of this initial MOU, the founding members will meet to review progress, and to discuss and agree upon the next phase of activities. At this time, either WHO/RHR will agree to continue to provide the secretariat services or pass the role to another partner that volunteers to undertake these services, at the decision of WHO/RHR.
6. WHO/RHR, by providing secretariat services, will support the IBP Consortium through the assignment of a full-time professional officer and administrative support staff. In addition, the Public Health Institute’s Population Leadership Program will second a USAID supported fellow for an initial period of two years to the WHO/RHR. The providing organization will be fully responsible for all the costs and employment arrangements of this person during the time of its term in accordance with a separate secondment agreement.
7. The member providing the secretariat services for the duration of this MOU, i.e. WHO/RHR will carry out the following functions:
 - Coordinate the development of joint global, regional and country-level programmes of work for the Consortium in collaboration with member organizations.
 - Coordinate, monitor and follow-up the timely performance of assignments undertaken by member organizations.
 - Follow up requests from regions and countries for support.
 - Identify prospective sources of funding for Consortium activities and prepare fundraising proposals in collaboration with the members.
 - Prepare the agenda and associated documentation for meetings of the Consortium members.
 - Support the development of systems to facilitate communication with partners and country teams and support the dissemination and exchange of information.
 - Follow-up on decisions taken by the meetings of Consortium members.
 - Act as a clearinghouse for inquiries about the Consortium and requests for assistance, as appropriate, to Consortium members.
 - Keep Consortium members and interested individuals worldwide apprised of the members’ activities through a quarterly newsletter prepared with the assistance of Consortium members, and subject to their agreement as to lay out and content.

- Function, if required, as ombudsman for concerns raised on the part of any individual or organization in the Consortium and assist in the resolution of any disagreements among the Consortium members.

6 IBP Consortium Structure Chart

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7 Funding of the IBP Consortium

Each IBP Consortium member will assist with the formulation of funding proposals to raise funds from various sources to support the development of the IBP programme of work, regional and country specific activities.

Each member will be expected to incorporate IBP activities into their annual programme of work and contribute technical expertise, materials and tools to further develop specific IBP activities.

Each member will support country activities where they have on-going funded projects and programmes.

8 General

The Consortium will not be a separate legal entity. The establishment of the Consortium is intended to promote coordination among its members but it does not have any mandate to act on behalf of its members. Any decisions by the members concerning the Consortium will be taken by consensus.

This MOU will be circulated to all Founding and New members as of December 2002. The MOU will be concluded from the date of the third signature of a Founding Member, received by the Secretariat for a period of two years. It will thereafter expire unless the members decide in writing to extend this MOU for another period of two years. A member may at any time terminate its membership of this Consortium with three months' written notice to the Secretariat, who will inform all the then current members. Termination is subject to the orderly conclusion of any ongoing activities agreed with the Secretariat.

Any dispute relating to the interpretation or application of this Memorandum of Understanding shall, unless amicably settled, be subject to informal conciliation. This may include mediation, or any other procedures upon which the Parties agree. In the event of failure of the latter, the dispute shall be settled by arbitration. The arbitration shall be conducted in accordance with the modalities to be agreed upon by the parties or, in the absence of agreement, in accordance with the UNCITRAL Arbitration Rules. The parties shall accept the arbitral award as final. Each Party shall be responsible for its own costs of such dispute resolution, unless otherwise agreed upon.

Implementing Best Practice Initiative

IBP Consortium

Operating Guidelines

Membership of the Implementing Best Practice Consortium

1 Responsibility of members

1 IBP Consortium

1.1 IBP Consortium members will:

- Act as advocates for the IBP Initiative and participate in all global, regional or country activities undertaken to promote and/or launch the IBP Initiative.
- Be expected to designate technical staff as their representatives to work with the IBP Co-ordinating Committee at the global, regional and country level.
- Allow the use of their technical and managerial materials and tools to support the IBP Initiative.
- Be prepared to support the country specific activities, the mentorship and supportive follow-up programme in at least countries where members have ongoing funded projects and programmes.
- Meet annually to review progress and approve an annual programme of work, which will be implemented through the IBP Co-ordinating Committee.

1.2 IBP Co-ordinating Committee

- The Chair of the IBP Co-ordinating Committee will rotate annually. For the initial two-year period of the MOU, Founding Members of partner agencies will be acting as the Chair in alphabetical order.
- With the support of the member providing the IBP Secretariat services, the Chair of the Co-ordinating Committee will convene biannual meetings to review the programme of work and prepare action plans undertaken by IBP Task Teams.
- The Chair of the Co-ordinating Committee, with the support of the member providing IBP Secretariat services, will submit an annual technical and financial report to IBP Consortium Heads of Agencies and other relevant bodies.
- The IBP Co-ordinating Committee will be responsible for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the IBP Initiative at the country and regional level.

1.3 Task Teams

- Members of the IBP Co-ordinating Committee will participate in IBP Task Teams according to their technical expertise and the working priorities of their own agency.
- Each Task Team will be assigned to undertake specific time-bound activities associated with the development of the IBP Initiative and the implementation of the programme of work.

- The lead agency co-ordinating the work of each Task Team will report on the progress achieved to the Chair of the Co-ordinating Committee and member providing IBP Secretariat services.

2 Secretariat Services

- The World Health Organization, through the Department of Reproductive Health and Research (WHO/RHR), will provide the Secretariat services in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding for the first two years of operation.
- Six months before the end of this initial MOU, the founding members will meet to review progress, discuss and agree to the next phase activities. At this time, either WHO/RHR will agree to continue to provide the secretariat services or pass the role to another partner that volunteers to undertake these services, at the decision of WHO/RHR.
- Act as the representative for the Consortium, at the international and governmental level, with bilateral and multilateral donors, aid agencies and the media, as appropriate.

3 Funding

- The purpose of the IBP Initiative is to build on existing funded projects and programmes.
- All members will contribute to the development of the IBP Initiative based on their current programme of work. Whenever possible, funds for specific technical inputs required to support the IBP Co-ordinating Committee, the work of the IBP Task Teams, country mentorship and follow-up programmes will be incorporated into existing programmes or projects that are working toward similar goals.
- Members of the IBP Co-ordinating Committee should support the development of funding proposals for specific regional and country activities.
- When external funding is obtained for the IBP Consortium, it will be distributed to IBP members by the member providing IBP Secretariat services and Chair of the Co-ordinating Committee in accordance with programme priorities and on receipt of a concise proposal from the member requiring financial assistance.
- Support should be provided to the member providing IBP Secretariat services to develop transparent financial management systems.

4 Consensus building and resolution of disputes

- Whenever possible, the IBP Consortium, IBP Co-ordinating Committee, Task Teams and country teams will work on the principle of consensus building, compromise, and conflict resolution, when necessary. The member providing IBP Secretariat services will act as arbitrator in all disputes.
- If this fails to resolve the dispute the matter will be referred to the IBP Consortium Heads of Agencies. The Chair of the IBP Co-ordinating and the member providing IBP Secretariat services will present the facts.
- If this fails to resolve the dispute, the matter will be dealt with as detailed in the Memorandum of Understanding.

5 Application to Join the IBP Consortium

- New organisations and agencies wishing to join the IBP Consortium can apply in writing to the member providing the IBP Secretariat services.

- All new applicants will receive a copy of the Memorandum of Understanding and Operating Guidelines.
- All new applicants must confirm their willingness to contribute to the development of the IBP Initiative at the global and/or regional and/or country level.
- Once a new applicant has agreed to sign the Memorandum of Understanding and Operating Guidelines, its name will be submitted to the members of the IBP Co-ordinating Committee, who in turn will inform the Head of its Agency.
- If within three weeks no objections are received to the application, the member providing the IBP Secretariat Services will send a letter of acceptance, copied to the IBP Co-ordinating Committee and background materials to the new partner agency.
- New members joining in this initial period of operation will not be eligible to chair the IBP Co-ordinating Committee.
- No new member will be suggested if the membership would constitute a perceived conflict of interest in accordance with WHO policy.

6 Leaving the IBP Consortium

- Members of the IBP Consortium are requested to provide the member providing IBP Secretariat services with a letter stating their reason(s) why they wish to leave the IBP Consortium.
- The member providing the IBP Secretariat services will pass this information on to members of the IBP Co-ordinating Committee.
- Members leaving the IBP Consortium are requested to provide three months' notice and complete their current programme of work.

7 Non-functioning Members

- Agencies that fail to participate in IBP Co-ordinating Committee activities and/or country specific activities on at least four occasions will be contacted by the member providing the IBP Secretariat services to determine if they have a specific constraint that limits their participation. Depending on the outcome of these discussions, the agency will be asked either to re-energise their commitment or reconsider whether continued membership is appropriate for them.