

NITAG Evaluation

Experience in Armenia

Background for the evaluation

- ✚ HPID support to the Armenian NITAG within the framework of the joint HPID / WHO-EURO work plan
- ✚ Initial mission to discuss about HPID support to the country in August 2015: decision to first conduct an evaluation of the NITAG to better define the work plan
- ✚ Evaluation conducted in November 2015

Implementation of the evaluation

NITAG evaluation – Experience in Armenia

Elements about the evaluation

- + Very limited knowledge about the NITAG before the evaluation mission
- + Methods
 - + Evaluation tool presented before (first evaluation with the revised tool)
 - + Time span for evaluation : November 2013 to October 2015
 - + Evaluation team: 2 persons from HPID
- + Generic objectives completed with specific objectives from the Armenian NITAG
 - + Countries objectives
 - Identify the appropriate functional improvements and related capacity-building strategies
 - Identify ways to increase decision-makers and other stakeholders' recognition of the NITAG
 - + Country specific objectives actually included in the generic objective
 - + No additional questions to answer them but highlight on these points
- + 5 days in country mission
 - + Language barrier (translator for interviews and translation of documents)

Overview of the different steps for the evaluation: key role of the NITAG



HPID
NITAG

- Conducted desk-review to better understand the context

- Completed the evaluation questionnaires (reviews of doc. and interviews)

- Compiled and analyzed all data

- Presented the findings (incl. recommendations) to various stakeholders

- Finalized the evaluation report

- Provided general information and documents

- Organized interviews with stakeholders
- Defined specific objectives
- Provided documents
- Answered to HPID questions

- Organized evaluation feedback to stakeholders
- Provided additional information

- Answered a few questions, reviewed and validated the report

Sources of information

+ Documents

- + Contextual documents: Armenia health system review, cMYP, joint appraisal report, report of the NIP...
- + Decrees establishing the NITAG, meeting agenda, meeting reports of ordinary meetings, attendance sheets, background documents (original documents, synthesis documents, members opinion)

+ Stakeholder's interviewed:

+ NITAG

- Chair
 - Executive Secretary
 - Staff from the secretariat
 - 3 other NITAG members
- + MoH : Head of Public Health Department, Chief officers in the Maternal and Child Health Inspectorate
 - + Healthcare professional associations: Vice President of Armenian Peadiatric Association and head of Armenian Hepatological Forum

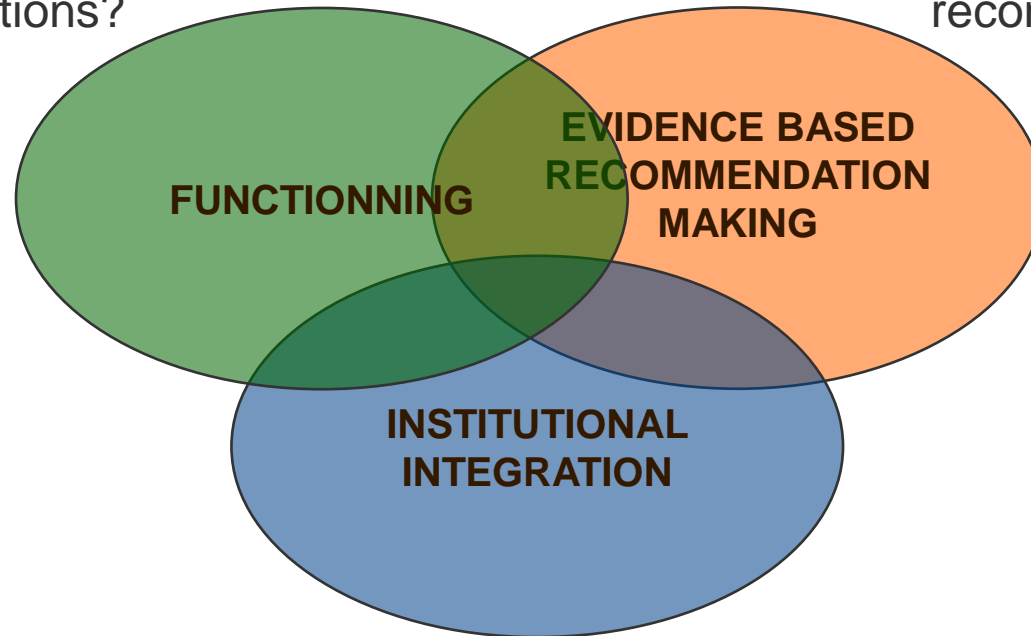
Overview of findings and recommendations

NITAG evaluation – Experience in Armenia

Three aspects of NITAG performance evaluated

Do the NITAG's structure and operations foster the timely generation of recommendations?

Has the NITAG developed, formalized and implemented processes to ensure quality recommendations?



Is the NITAG fully integrated into the national immunization decision-making system?

Do the NITAG's structure and operations foster the timely generation of recommendations?

- + Decree establishing the NITAG includes information for NITAG running but many points not addressed and no other document guides the functioning of the NITAG (e.g. SOP)
- + Membership and secretariat
 - + 12 members covering 4 medical disciplines
 - + No liaison nor ex-officio members
 - + Four skilled and motivated staff from the NIP involved in secretariat activities (Executive Secretary considered as core member)
- + Planning and agenda setting: lack of planning
 - + Agenda is set up meeting per meeting
 - + Many extraordinary meetings as follow-up with ordinary meetings
 - + NITAG does not receive direct requests from MoH
- + Desire for transparency and independence but no policy to prevent Conflicts of Interest
- + No budget for NITAG meetings and activities (capacity building, paid scientific publication, ad-hoc studies...)

Has the NITAG developed, formalized and implemented processes to ensure quality recommendations?

- + Role of NITAG in handling the overall policy questions is limited
- + Consistent efforts to ensure a good basis knowledge for NITAG recommendations
 - + Type of data considered quite consistent
 - + Importance of data related to vaccine safety, AEFI and contraindications
 - + Difficult access to some scientific publication / good access to national data
 - + Some members contribute in searching and providing evidence (possible duplication of work)
 - + Synthesis of available evidence usually circulated before the meeting but lacks of reference and formatting
- + Lack of process standardization diminishes efficiency
 - + No recommendation framework to guide the work of the NITAG
 - + Limited capacity for tasks related to evidence based recommendation making
 - + Absence of a fixed format for outputs does not allow the recipient to understand the work process and the evidence considered
 - + Even though scientific literature and national data are considered, recommendations rely more on expert opinions than evidence
- + Meeting reports not detailed and no recommendation notes as such

Is the NITAG fully integrated into the national immunization decision-making system?

- ✚ NITAG members are renowned experts, but low awareness and visibility of the NITAG as a body
- ✚ No formal interactions between the NITAG (as a body) and the decision-making level
 - ✚ Interactions rely on individuals
 - ✚ Requests from decision-makers are addressed to the NIP
 - ✚ Recommendations are not formally communicated to the decision-making level
- ✚ Limited communication and visibility of the NITAG towards other national stakeholders
- ✚ Potential contribution of the NITAG and importance of evidence-based approach acknowledged by MoH and other national stakeholders

Recommendations

Functioning

- ✚ Develop annual agenda, in collaboration with national stakeholders (and 2-3 years horizon scanning)
 - ✚ Better planning
 - ✚ Contribute to reinforce the visibility / integration of the NITAG
- ✚ Develop SOP (and generic documents)
 - ✚ To facilitate the functioning of the committee by standardizing some of the tasks and formalizing communication circuits
 - ✚ To address some points not considered in the decree
- ✚ Implement a Col prevention policy (after thorough explanation and discussion with members)
- ✚ Carefully consider the expansion of membership (incl. new expertise, liaison and ex-officio members)

Recommendations

Evidence Based Recommendation making

- ✦ Structure and standardize the process for recommendation making. The topic is broad and two points can be quickly done and help structure the whole process
 - ✦ Develop a recommendation framework to refine the question and guide the work of the NITAG
 - ✦ Use NITAG Resource Centre to get access to further literature
- ✦ Standardize documents to foster the strengthening of the process and quickly increase credibility and visibility of the NITAG activities
 - ✦ Template for presenting background documents, meeting reports, recommendation notes
- ✦ Set-up Working Groups
 - ✦ Bring more experts and more focus for the preparation
 - ✦ Release some time for the Secretariat
 - ✦ Should allow to limit the number of extraordinary meetings
 - ✦ A mapping of experts can be conducted to this end
- ✦ Capacity building to address all these points along the whole process for recommendation making

Recommendations

Integration in the immunization decision making system

- ✚ Formalize communication with MoH (decision making level)
- ✚ Develop a communication plan to increase overall NITAG visibility towards MoH, stakeholders and general population. Some of the actions can be:
 - ✚ Wider dissemination of NITAG recommendations (with evidence underlying the recommendation)
 - ✚ Increase links with professional associations and other stakeholders (e.g. include them in working groups)
 - ✚ NITAG should build on the reputation and professional network of the members to increase visibility.
- ✚ Conduct a mapping of stakeholders

Use of the evaluation findings

- ✚ Extended discussion with the NITAG
- ✚ Development of the work plan for NITAG strengthening based on the results of the evaluations
- ✚ Debrief on the key findings and recommendations with Deputy Minister in charge of Public Health
 - ✚ Eager from listening the recommendations and agreed with them
 - ✚ Proposed to describe the role of the NITAG in the new public health law
- ✚ Country suggested to conduct another evaluation at the end of the support period to measure the changes

Lessons learned and recommendations

NITAG evaluation – Experience in Armenia

Conclusion

- ✚ Evaluation very useful to identify relevant and specific actions to strengthen the NITAG (work plan)
 - ✚ In particular, allowed to identify "quick wins"
- ✚ Evaluation (and feedback) was an opportunity to create momentum around the NITAG

Recommendations to conduct NITAG evaluation

- ✚ Simplify / shorten some parts of the questionnaire
- ✚ If possible, obtain from NITAG and analyze documents before the in-country evaluation to save time and be more focused during the mission
- ✚ For one or two recommendations, explore in details the whole process, involved stakeholders and related documents
- ✚ Allow time for open for frank and open discussions

Thanks to you
Thanks to WHO-EURO
Thanks to the Armenian NITAG
members and secretariat

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