Working at the country level as a WHO consultant: Uzbekistan

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1st lesson on policy making

- Evidence is important but never enough
- Policy making processes:
  - Non-rationalist, nonlinear, and uncertain

Factors influencing;

- Governance and institutions
- Policy actors and interests
- Ideas and ideologies
- Policy processes

Health 2020 Event in UZB

- National follow up event on the Uzbekistan Health 2020 state program and action plan development, implementation and monitoring
  - Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 27-28 October 2015

- Previous Health 2020 meeting:
  - High-level sub-regional event on Health 2020 implementation, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 27-28 November 2014

WHO Experts

- Consulting team:
  - Dr. Richard Alderslade (WHO Consultant)
  - Mr. Juha Mikkonen (WHO Consultant)

- Other WHO experts at the 27-28 October Health 2020 meeting in Tashkent:
  - Mr. Jo Jewell (Technical Officer, WHO Regional Office for Europe)
  - Mrs. Sarah Simpson (WHO Consultant)

Terms of Reference (TOR)
i.e. my contract

"Provide assistance to the Ministry of Health and the technical working group established for drafting the new UZB National Health Strategy 2016-2020."

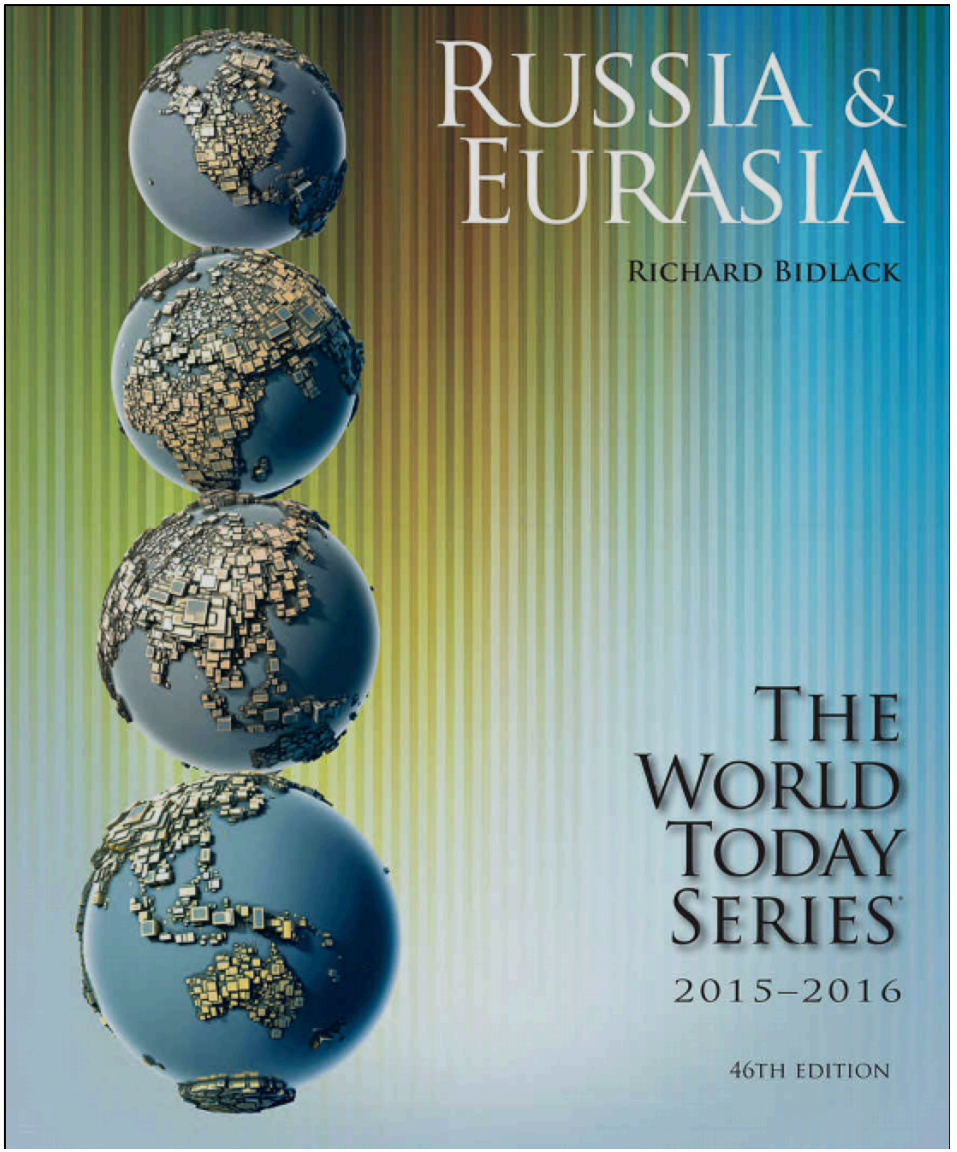
The international expert is expected to:

1. Support the work of the senior consultant
2. Work closely with the MoH experts and WHO CO UZB
3. Drafting report of the mission under the guidance of the senior consultant

From North to East

- Countries in the region can be and are very different

- Study the context
  - WHO (e.g. HiTs, databases)
  - UN reports (e.g. human rights situation)
  - Other publications



Context I

- The Republic of Uzbekistan is a country with a strong top-down governance structure.
  - Highly centralized governance model needs different approach than de-centralized

- UZB policymaking is principally understood as laws and decrees that are set by the central government

- Civil society is relatively weak, and that the capacities of non-governmental actors to steer government's policy in Uzbekistan are limited

Context II

- The Republic of Uzbekistan has taken committed steps towards the implementation of Health 2020. This progress is reflected in the draft of the State Program for Health and associated documents
  - The State Program was drafted in 2014-2015 through WHO supported multi-stakeholder consultations and the draft has now been submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers.

- A draft non-communicable diseases (NCD) strategy written in the context of Health 2020 is awaiting approval from the Cabinet of Ministers

Context III

- Information sharing and fostering engagement through multiple processes can be one of the best strategies

- The process itself can be important and increase receptiveness to new initiatives to promote health

Format of Our Report

- **1. Key policy points to PCR/NHP team**
- **2. Background and current state**
  - a) Country's situation with NHP
  - b) Country's commitment
  - c) International community activities
- **3. WHO commitment and updates**
  - Report of the event: Day 1 & Day 2
- **4. Next steps**
- **5. Risk assessment and pending issues**
- **6. Gathering evidence**

Reflections

- There has been exposure to international experiences through WHO supported action and publications
  - All the evidence provided by WHO technical staff appears to be highly valued
  - Printed materials

- There has been some concerns expressed concerning about lobbying influence from the alcohol/food/tobacco industries

Reflections

- Human rights situation
  - There is very limited involvement of civil society
  - Governance structure: top-down, centralized
  - Diplomacy: What is realistic? How to express challenges and opportunities?

- In the Republic of Uzbekistan, intersectoral collaboration is relatively new approach to decision making and incremental steps should be encouraged

Approach

- Discuss with the senior consultant
  - Expectations
  - Choosing your approach

- Know your own limits and the limits of your mandate
  - WHO is to provide advice and support; not to write national policies
  - Forget your own agenda

Lessons Learnt I

- Write notes
  - Constantly and right at the moment
  - You will forget things
  - Focus on the big picture in the end

- Following translators is sometimes difficult
  - My experience:
    - Presenters spoke fast; Russian-English translators could not keep up with them
    - Confirm

Lessons Learnt II

- If there is a country office, make connections and utilize their expertise
  - Head of Country Office provided valuable information

- Collect all the materials (including Powerpoint presentations) right at the event
  - Do not wait someone to send them

- *Uzbekistan-H2020-Gathered_evidence-October_27-28_2015.zip (file size: 160 megabytes)*
  - *Presentation, policy papers, articles, reports …*

Lessons Learnt III

- No quick fixes or quick wins
  - A long process that requires commitment
- Connect with local experts and MoH officials
  - Also outside of the official meetings
- Specific context of post-soviet countries
  - Culture, local customs, politics …

Conclusions I

- Idealism vs. realism
- Theory vs. practice
  - Which approach is the most effective?
  - Buiding the bridge

- Need to be thoughtful: How to express certain things in a specific context
    - In the meeting
    - Written report (~5-10 pgs)

Conclusions II

- What is the most efficient strategy to promote equity goals (H2020)
  - Sometimes you need to be direct
  - Sometimes indirect strategy can be more beneficial

- Learning experience; it will take time; meanwhile enjoy the process