

**Opening Speech by HE Deputy Minister Dr. Thein Thein Htay**  
**Strengthening Township Health Departments**  
**11 March 2015**

Dear Colleagues,  
Mingalarbar,

It is a pleasure to be here today seeing our Ministry of Health staff, UN partner agencies and esteemed Development Partners in the Health Sector. I'm very happy to witness the commitment by senior management of the MOH towards leading the strategic thinking for coordinated and comprehensive planning, strengthening of corresponding management systems and practices, including financial management capacities.

Myanmar is embarking upon an accelerated curve of development and our Government is committed to increase access to health care and to improve quality of services – we are moving towards UHC. The Ministry of Health will enable the scale-up of health service coverage across Myanmar. Rapid scale up of services will deliver rapid reductions in morbidity and mortality and will significantly contribute towards poverty alleviation and human development. Strengthening of planning, budgeting and financing of health services under the leadership of the Ministry of Health will underpin success.

To deliver on our goal, the health sector is allocated more public funds and the Ministry of Health has received, and will receive every year, larger and larger budgets from Parliament in the National Budget. In addition it is a very important and laudable contributing factor to welcome donor interest in investing in the Myanmar National Health System and the significant increase in external public financing made available by various donors.

The key in delivering more services to the communities is to focus on Township Health Departments (THD), as this is the management unit under which most services are delivered. It is paramount that THDs are well functioning, have strengthened capability to develop

workplans and budgets based on policies and principles as established by MOH, have adequate management capacities and processes in place to deliver these planned services and supervise implementation of numerous initiatives as well as absorb funds in a well-structured fashion.

It is important to note that the ultimate product of the policy process is the allocation of resources. In other words, workplans based on priorities as defined in policies include the list of activities necessary to implement in order to achieve the policy objectives and then inputs are defined that are necessary for delivering these activities – and budgets are nothing else but a monetary expression of input needs as defined by the workplans. Thus budgets are an outcome of a rigorous planning process that is the final output of any policy. Funds then can follow plans and budgets. Therefore for any allocation of resources and funds to flow to services it is first necessary to have costed workplans and budgets in place which could be then followed by funds that flow along the same lines as defined in the approved costed workplans/budgets.

The Department of Disease Control as budget owners are already fully own their programme and its budget and are empowered to make these plans and deliver services in a structured fashion, via established workplans/budgets developed on an agreed SOP and supervised by a layered and well defined management structure in all three National Programmes, via S/R HDs, DMOs, ROs and Teamleaders and TMOs.

It is this component that is looked into in this workshop, to further strengthen the principles and processes how the Department of Disease Control develops costed workplans and budgets nationwide in all THDs, how implementation is managed and supervised and reported and how funds are channelled, accessed and accounted for based on agreed principles and processes defined in an approved SOP owned by the Department of Disease Control.

This is a critical step in strengthening health systems and management and service delivery capabilities in THDs. This workshop is limited to the three priority infectious diseases but the

principles and skills and capacities strengthened are cross cutting and all aspects of health service delivery will benefit. I congratulate the Department of Disease Control for this effort, when using their vertical programmes and funding and invest into health system strengthening, with particular focus on service delivery capabilities in THDs. This is a fine example how vertical programmes can be designed to have a strengthening impact on health systems, including the strengthening of financial management capacities as well. Without such capabilities and systems no vertical programme can deliver.

This is the second time such workshop on a national scale is taking place and this time we invited THD's Accountants and Senior Clerks too to expand the capacities and also focus on the financial management aspects of the scheme. I expect full dedication and commitment from all participants and officers of the MOH in following the established principles and processes and maintain the ethos and institutional culture of public service. The sincerity and competence of THDs is key in the MOH to achieve its policy objectives, bringing more and better services closer to the communities, moving towards UHC.

This is the expectation of the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and such principles correspond with my own convictions. Standards in public sector management are uniform irrespective of funding source and the skills, capacities and processes strengthened via this system is a step forward to deliver all services in the public sector via ONE PLAN, ONE SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM.

We must all work towards developing coordinated and comprehensive Township level costed operational health plans deriving from the National Health Plan which all contributors are committed to and financing it through a singular modality. The workshop taking place in Naypyitaw today will be a step forward in terms of enabling such plans to be financed and priority interventions to be undertaken. More men, women and children will be able to access health services and more lives will be saved.

I would like to thank you for your commitment to working with us and wish you esteemed colleagues a good constructive discussion today that I hope will be a key step towards formulating the road towards achieving our common vision.

I would also like to thank UNOPS to assist in this endeavour.

Thank you.