**Guidance on formulating a clear problem statement**

**What is a problem statement?**

A problem statement is usually one or two sentences to explain the problem you want to address. In general, a problem statement will outline the negative points of the current situation and explain why this matters.

**How to formulate a problem statement?**

Creation of a problem statement is an activity that is best completed in a group.

1. The DHMT takes the problem that they want to address (this is a problem that they have prioritised from the list of problems identified in the situation analysis).
2. Get each person to write his or her own problem statement based on the prioritised problem without conferring. Compare each of the sentences/ looking for common themes and wording.
3. Start to write an improved statement using the common themes.
4. Ensure that the statement focuses on an existing problem.
5. Try to include the time frame over which the problem has been occurring.
6. Wherever possible, try to quantify the problem.

A problem statement can be refined as you start to further investigate root cause.

Finally, review your new problem statement against the following criteria:

* It should focus on only one problem.
* It should be one or two sentences long.
* It should not suggest a solution.

**Examples of problem statements**

* In 2017 health workers are frequently absent from the peripheral health units in XXX district.
* Low coverage of antenatal services in XXX district which has led to poor birth outcomes.
* Poor implementation of new vaccine vaccination schedule leading to high dropout rate of pneumococcal (46.9%) and rotarix (19.1%) vaccination in the municipality in 2012.
* High dropout rate (40%) in EPI performance on the new vaccines (ROTA and Pneumo) for the first half year of 2012.