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Abstract

WEPE0594 - Changing over from implementer to facilitator: AMREF supports districts to scale up the MEMA kwa Vijana programme in Mwanza, Tanzania

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Issues: Non-governmental organization (NGO)-led interventions are often small-scale and vertical in nature. High priority is placed on scaling up delivery of beneficial interventions through local structures to enhance ownership, coverage and sustainability. To contribute to this process NGOs must change over from implementers to facilitators.

Description: AMREF implemented phase one of MEMA kwa Vijana (MkV1), an innovative reproductive health programme for young people. Building on its successes, AMREF and the four districts involved, developed the second phase (MkV2) to scale up interventions tenfold to cover all primary schools and health facilities in the districts over four years (2004-2007). In MkV1, AMREF was the prime mover: trained and supervised teachers and health workers; made key decisions and controlled finances. In MkV2, AMREF adopted a facilitative role to support district-led implementation but maintained financial oversight.

Lessons learned:

- Initial capacity imbalances mean that risk of NGO reversion to implementer role is high. Effective transition to facilitator role requires commitment by both District government and NGO partners
- Successful NGO transition to facilitator must be linked to effective capacity building to ensure districts are able to take over the implementation.
- Lack of coordination between NGOs sends conflicting messages about what districts should expect of them.
- Memorandum of understanding between partners are not binding and do not imply their commitment over time. Financial commitment is the key indicator of intention to complete
- Outside control of programme funds could hinder development of true district ownership.

Recommendations: NGOs working within government structures to scale up programmes should be committed to capacity building through regular consultations, joint planning and timely feedback within and between sectors. This is critical in creating an environment in which true ownership may take root in districts and sustainability thrive.