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**PROVIDING EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT  
ASSISTANCE:**

**SIX KEYS TO WORKING WITH  
FAMILY PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS  
IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

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**PROVIDING EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE:  
SIX KEYS TO WORKING WITH FAMILY PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS IN  
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**BACKGROUND**

The experiences and lessons learned presented in this paper were obtained during the implementation of the Family Planning Management Training project (FPMT) and the current Family Planning Management Development (FPMD) project. Both of these five-year, A.I.D.-funded projects demonstrate the Agency's commitment to the principle that good management is the key to making family planning programs more effective. Both projects work toward the goal of improving safe and effective family planning service delivery in developing countries by helping programs strengthen their management capabilities. The main difference between the two projects is that the FPMT approach was through the training of individual managers and FPMD works to develop and strengthen the organization.

Between 1985 and 1991, FPMT worked with over 30 family planning organizations and numerous Ministries of Health in 24 different countries assisting managers in making family planning programs work better.

In this process we have always attempted to:

- Tie management strengthening to the level of organizational development
- Provide management interventions as part of an overall program of institutional strengthening.

Family planning organizations follow the conventional stages of organizational development

from fragile/emergent entities to mature and sustainable organizations. Any effort to strengthen management capabilities must recognize the level of development of the organization concerned. Our goal is to help organizations progress from one stage to the next.

In order for organizations to become strong and robust, management efforts must be directed at several levels:

- ▶ the organization's "mission" (purpose);
- ▶ the organization's strategy (long-term plans, taking into account the internal and external environments);
- ▶ the organization's structure (allocation of roles and responsibilities);
- ▶ the organization's systems (mechanisms/processes for getting work done).

Working at one organizational level and not at others makes it much less likely that long term benefits will accrue. Although we are usually called upon to assist an organization at the systems level, we have tried to incorporate in any systems level intervention assistance which strengthens the other corresponding organizational levels as well.

### **PRODUCING ORGANIZATIONAL AND MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT IN A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT**

During the past six years that we have worked intensively with organizations, the family planning environment has changed rapidly. Family planning providers were not and are not working in a static and stable situation.

These specific changes include:

- ▶ More commitment to family planning on the part of developing countries.
- ▶ More demand for family planning from the men and women of reproductive age.
- ▶ More donors.
- ▶ More emphasis on sustainability
- ▶ More family planning organizations within countries
- ▶ More innovation
- ▶ More emphasis on quality

#### **More commitment to family planning on the part of developing countries:**

While at the beginning of the 1980's, family planning was still a controversial subject in many developing countries, during the decade there was a realization at all levels, that the rapid rates of population growth were incompatible with development aspirations and that family planning, child spacing, maternal and child health were

inextricably linked.

**More demand for family planning from the men and women of reproductive age:**

Along with this realization came demand for services from men and women of reproductive age. Some programs were better able to meet this demand than others. Many of us who worked in this field have personally seen the long lines of people (usually women) waiting for services and an amazing commitment on the part of these clients to overcome bureaucratic and logistical blockages which still impede true access to services.

**More donors:**

Although the U.S. Agency for International Development was by far the leading donor in family planning initiatives when the FPMT project began, the next six years saw the World Bank, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and other non-bilateral donors become much more active in supporting family planning programs. As a result of the entry of additional donors, many family planning organizations, themselves very fragile, were often inundated with the donors' requests and requirements. In many cases, top management was spending more time working with donors than running their programs. In Nepal, for example, it was anecdotally reported that during the past two years, the heads of the family planning service groups in the Ministry of Health have spent over two-thirds of their time with donors, often in duplicate activities.

**More emphasis on sustainability:**

Somewhat paradoxically, despite the increasing number of donors and funds, all donors began encouraging organizations to become sustainable. But what was sustainability, and how would attempts to achieving this status affect an organization's mission and current mix of programs? Some donors and some organizations equated sustainability with financial self-sufficiency, which may have resulted in reducing or eliminating services provided to the poor or underserved, or making other decisions to save money that would not have been in the best interest of their clients. FPMT worked with both donors and organizations to better understand and define sustainability. We came to realize that true sustainability is a very long term process which has at least three components: the ability of organizations to respond to changes in their environment, to be better able to serve those in need, and to achieve greater control over their resources (often by diversifying funding sources).

**More family planning organizations within countries:**

In response to increased demand for family planning services and increased donor interest, family planning organizations have tried to expand their services rapidly and

form new family planning organizations. Rapid expansion, however, often meant hiring inexperienced people who needed increased supervision and support. In addition, as programs got larger, decentralized management responsibilities were needed for efficient program operation. Rapidly expanding organizations needed to shed their rigid organizational systems to meet the demands of providing services and prevent bottlenecks in decision-making that occur in centralized organizations. This has proven to be very difficult, especially in light of cultural constraints impeding decentralization, delegation, and loss of control from the center.

#### **More innovation:**

Management of technical and organizational innovation is essential for successful family planning organizations. *Technical innovation*, such as the introduction of Norplant, requires new management systems such as installing a management information system that keeps track of Norplant users and contact them when the time comes for removal. *Organizational innovation*, such as new mechanisms to deliver services at the community level rather than only at static facilities, also impel programs toward new ways of doing things.

#### **More emphasis on quality:**

In recent years much more attention has been paid to improving the quality of family planning services. Coupled with the demand for improving quality has been an increasing focus on the needs of the individual client. In addition, there is a growing realization that the number of clients served, the effective use of contraceptives, and the demographic impact will all increase as the quality of services improves. Demand falls on management to provide higher quality services. Managers and programs are thus being increasingly scrutinized to make sure they provide quality services and a great deal of effort is being spent to define and measure quality.

## **LESSONS LEARNED BY THE FPMT PROJECT**

### **Strengthening an Organization's Mission**

**A clear statement of mission is the first building block for organizational effectiveness:**

When an organization develops or modifies its mission, it should answer the question "Why are we here?" Reviewing the mission provides an opportunity for staff to rethink the direction of the organization, to reinforce the esprit de corps of the staff, and for the top management to hear concerns they might not otherwise be aware of. It builds enthusiasm and consensus and should motivate the staff to work toward

common goals. Everyone in the organization should know and support the mission.

**The mission statement provides the foundation for a vision for the future and for adapting to change:**

Linked to the question "Why are we here?" is "Where should we be in 10-20 years?" the vision of the organization for the future. This is particularly critical considering the ever increasing and significant changes in the environment discussed earlier. A healthy organization is one that is confident about its current role and faces future challenges with enthusiasm. Another lesson we have learned is that an organization which has a good mission statement, supported by members of the organization, is much better placed to envisage change, prepare for change, and thus better serve their clients.

### **Strengthening an Organization's Strategy**

**Strategic vision must come from within:**

Our work with organizations at the mission level has been linked to the preparation of a strategic plan. In fact, establishing a mission is the first step of the strategic planning process. Organizations prepare strategic plans based on their shared understanding of the purpose of the organization, on the organization's internal strengths and weaknesses, and on the conditions in the external environment. Currently, where so much in the environment is changing, strategic planning becomes even more crucial. The process of developing the strategic plan should help the organization to understand the external environment better and thus strengthen the organization's capacity to adapt to changes.

While outside assistance can help an organization formulate its thoughts, for an organization to be strong, the development of the strategic vision must come from within. Concepts and ideals from all levels of the organization and from many sources should contribute to the vision, but ultimately it is the leader of the organization who must embody this vision and get support for it. However, because a strong sense of organizational identity is often lacking, donor priorities might and often do become the driving force behind the organizations visions for the future and its strategies.

**When it comes to strategic planning: the process is the product:**

The strategic planning process forces people to look carefully at the organization, at its internal strengths and weaknesses, and at the external environment. It makes people think and exchange their ideas, and in the end the staff have a shared view of

what the organization does and what it should achieve. This enables the organization to be more responsive to changes in the environment and enhance its flexibility. Strategic planning offers the organization an opportunity to plan on whether, and how, it should expand, how to attract and best use donor resources, and how it can take advantage of innovation, for example, how it must adapt to change.

Preparing a strategic plan is time consuming and often necessitates discussing very sensitive topics. The organization needs to understand this and accept the long term commitment and the necessity for openness which the preparation of the strategic plan implies.

While the strategic planning process has clearly been useful to organizations, it is less clear how useful the actual strategic planning document is. More attention needs to be paid to this question. We need to know whether and how the plan helps guide the organization, if this guidance is useful and whether it contributes to the progression from one organizational stage to another.

#### **A strategic plan is not an operational plan:**

Operational planning which involves details on how activities will be implemented over a shorter period of time (usually a year) is different from a strategic plan, which is more future-oriented and involves a great deal of introspective analysis.

In the current environment, the pressures on these organizations are so great that they usually want to shift quickly into operational planning, since this is usually the only kind of planning required by donors. This may mean that the strategic planning process is ended before it has been completely thought through and carried out. The strategic plan should fuel the operational plan and allow the organization to set priorities from within.

#### **The strategy of the part must reflect the strategy of the whole:**

An additional consideration in both strategic and operational planning is that when the organization is part of a larger entity (such as the Associations that belong to the International Planned Parenthood Federation), the philosophy and practices of the larger entity must be taken into account. This is more easily said than done since often the local organization might have a strategy for its future that does not meet with total approval from the parent organization.

### **Strengthening Organizational Structure**

The area of organizational structure (who does what and who has what responsibility within the organization) is one of the most sensitive and where potential changes seem the most

threatening. There appear to be two kinds of situations in which the desire for change comes from within an organization. In the first, the organization's leadership wants to make changes in the structure but does not want to be open about this to the remainder of the organization. In the second, the levels below the top want the organizational structure to change but feel that the leadership will not accept the change. Neither situation is optimal.

### **Crisis is a powerful agent for change:**

Because they are difficult and disruptive, changes in organizational structure are often only requested or successful in response to an external crisis, usually financial.

Although it is from a sense of crisis that structural changes are requested, there are many other circumstances when structural change is called for. A major indicator of the need for structural change in an organization is "responsibility without authority." This situation occurs when an individual is responsible for seeing that a certain task is carried out or an objective is achieved but that person does not have the authority to make the decisions which will ensure that the work gets done. This very common situation can sap morale and lead to great inefficiencies if it is not addressed.

The FPMT/D project has assisted NGOs to reallocate roles and responsibilities by conducting manpower planning assessments, performing task analyses, revising job descriptions, establishing career ladders, and by assisting the organization in activities that would improve internal communication. The result of this work is to clarify and often change who supervises whom, who is in charge of what, and how and why decisions get made.

We have worked, for example, with Family Planning Associations (FPAs) in Africa and Latin America, to help bring about structural changes from within. Technical assistance in this area was indeed requested because of the change in the environment which had caused rapid expansion and financial constraints. Changing organizational structure is a multi-step process that takes place over several months or even years. Before a project such as FPMT/D can assist with this difficult process, its relationship with the organization must be well established and there must be a sense of trust between the organization and the project. In the end, the process of changing organizational structure can be extremely successful and result in improved staff morale, lower staff turnover, salaries that are fair in relation to the marketplace, more equitable treatment of staff members, and thus greater efficiencies.

We have not had the opportunity to assist formal restructuring within the public sector. In fact, our work to date strongly indicates that outside assistance in this area would not be effective. Individual managers within the public sector have little control over structural issues - hiring/firing, position classification, etc. Changes in these areas usually imply major civil service reform. With the increase in the number of donors, especially the World Bank, governments are being strongly urged to make

such reforms, but it does not fall within the mandate of the technical assistance organization.

We have, however, had considerable experience assisting the public sector, through nonformal channels, to change the way family planning is organized and to delegate much more authority to local communities. This is also structural change but this type of change involves the whole program rather than the individual organization.

**Building strong, non-formal linkages between public sector decision makers can lead to "de facto" structural change:**

In Bangladesh, we have successfully worked with the Ministry of Health and Family Planning to help restructure their decision-making through increased delegation to local communities. By encouraging a partnership between the central ministry and local government, decisions about when, how, and where local family planning services are provided, the control of resources and management have shifted from the center to the community. This process, also known as decentralization, came about through structural change - albeit nonformal - and was not resisted once initial central level fears of complete loss of control were assuaged.

### **Strengthening Organizational Systems**

With the increased pressure put on family planning organizations to expand services and to be more efficient (pressure which can come from their own governments, their own organizations, donors, or clients), managers are paying more attention to the internal organizational systems. Indeed, it is at the systems level (procedures and mechanisms for planning, implementing, and evaluating activities) that most organizations perceive that they have a problem, and it is at this level that FPMT was, and FPMD is, most often requested to provide assistance. For example, an organization needing to pass an audit would request help in preparing for it. In another example, a regional office experiencing stockouts of supplies because of cumbersome central office financial procedures might request help in improving its financial management system. It was at the systems level, that FPMT most often started its collaboration with organizations.

Improving systems is often felt by family planning managers to be the key to successfully responding to environmental change. However, problems with a system are usually a symptom of a larger issue. Treating the symptoms may improve the situation but for only a short time.

**Treat the disease, not the symptoms:**

Management systems do not exist in a vacuum; if a specific system or management tool is not working well, the problem is probably much larger. For example, outside assistance can help improve supervisory protocols, supervisors can be trained to use

these new protocols, but if there is no gasoline for their vehicles or no money for per diems, then people will not be able to go into the field and implement the improved system. Using a "bandaid" approach and only solving the problem at hand without looking at the other organizational levels will not improve the situation in the long term.

**Define terms and expected results precisely:**

Family planning organizations in developing countries know a great deal of management jargon. Organizations often use management terms when requesting assistance, but may have a different understanding of that term than the organization providing the technical assistance. For example, a family planning organization may request help in management information systems (MIS), but what they really mean is "More computers, please." Their request may very well not indicate an organizational commitment to the long-term process of helping managers at all levels to have the information they need to make informed decisions.

FPMT provides many examples of successful systems improvements in the public sector and NGO sector.

FPMT worked with Kenya's National Council on Population and Development (NCPD), a governmental organization charged with coordinating the activities of the various family planning organizations in Kenya. FPMT helped NCPD to develop a management information system that monitors all the service statistics, and a financial system that tracks all NCPD finances and enables NCPD to monitor donor accounts, budgets, and expenses.

In Rwanda, FPMT worked with the Office National de la Population (ONAPO), a parastatal organization which oversees the nation's family planning program. FPMT and ONAPO developed systems in the areas of financial management, budgeting, control, and reporting, which allow ONAPO to conduct more accurate and prompt financial reporting and to combine the planning and budgeting processes at the regional and national levels. In Burkina Faso, improvements in supervision have been effected within the public sector. Numerous other systems improvements were put in place in non-governmental organizations in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

## **LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE**

Our experience in providing management assistance to family planning organizations in the past five years has taught us three basic lessons:

*First*, organizational development and sustainability is a process of growth which takes place

over a period of many years and is not linked to donor project life cycles. Donors are often the driving force for change and must make long-term commitments and encourage risk taking.

*Second*, to avoid providing only "bandaid" assistance, the organization providing the technical assistance should have consultants who are not only extremely well qualified technically but who also have broad management knowledge and are able to see the big picture. This will prevent management interventions that address symptoms rather than the fundamental causes of the problem. Defining competence for consultants is not easy, but extremely critical is how well consultants function in multi-cultural situations and how effective they are at earning the trust of their counterparts in a developing country organization. Further, organizations providing technical assistance should have sound internal "quality control" mechanisms.

*Third*, national family planning programs must exploit their strengths, collaborate effectively to meet the needs of diverse clients, adapt to change, and develop strong leadership.

These interventions and activities are clearly interrelated and show that action must be taken at many levels to promote the strength of family planning programs and subsequently the expansion of safe and effective family services to those in need.