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***A scheme to strengthen
policy implementation
capacity in the Ministry of
Health***

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1 Introduction

In terms of skills transfer and capacity development, technical assistance (TA) in the first SWAp was a failure. This was partly due to lack of Malawian counterparts with quality staff leaving the service. The TAs were required to do the jobs themselves. It was also partly due to strained professional relationships between staff and TAs often caused by differential salaries and poor selection, management and supervision of TAs [1]. The management arrangements have been improved so that TAs are better selected, appointed, and managed with clear cut supervision and performance appraisal. However, senior and middle management staff can not benefit from TA skills transfer unless there is continuity of staff linked to an approach which allows personal professional development. This scheme is designed to allow this to take place.

2 The principles of the scheme

1. **Staff continuity.** Staff need to be in post for the duration of the SWAp to allow programme implementation and the recognition of personal success through the meeting of performance targets.
2. **Incentives.** Staff incentives in terms of salary enhancement are required to encourage the best staff to remain in the MOH and remain dedicated to the successful implementation of the EHP.
3. **Incentives linked to success.** Salary enhancement can be conditional on successful implementation of specific targets. This will require individual performance review.
4. **TA management.** A TA will be allocated as required to a member of staff who has agreed to participate in the scheme. A condition of the scheme is acceptance of TA. The objective setting of the TA is undertaken jointly by the counterpart and TA and signed off by the supervising manager.
5. **Eligibility.** The scheme covers senior staff crucial to the successful implementation of the SWAp, which means senior staff in HQ, zones, central hospitals and districts.

3 The bare bones of the scheme

3.1 Staff continuity

1. The Public Services Commission will be requested to support the scheme, approve the incentive package and guarantee staff continuity for the lifetime of the SWAp, subject to agreed contingencies.
2. Staff entering the scheme will sign a contract lasting until the end of the SWAp period with strict penalties of early withdrawal – incentives will have to be repaid.

3.2 Incentives

The College of Medicine (COM) has a salary enhancement scheme which was at the level of \$1000 per month and is now \$750 per month. The scheme is a success. A similar level of remuneration will be required for MOH staff. Other incentives will include bespoke training such as MPH, MBA, etc. To encourage district staff to stay in their districts and not go to meetings for which meetings allowances are given, they could be encouraged to forgo such allowances. A personal training plan will also be constructed for each manager to fill gaps in competency required to meet the needs of the POW2. The plan will be compiled in conjunction with HR Department to allow time for MPH, MBA etc.

3.3 Performance review

Individual performance review (IPR) will be integral. Personal objectives linked to SWAp implementation requirements will be set and individual performance measured. A successful IPR has been used in the Fellowship Scheme run for the MOH by the Management Unit of the COM. This can be adopted by this scheme. The IPR approach used in the Fellowship Scheme is found at Appendix 1. IPR will be additional to any staff appraisal scheme adopted by the MOH. Annual individual performance reviews will be undertaken jointly by the line manager and one of the Scheme co-ordinators.

3.4 TA

No TA will be allocated to a department unless the counterpart has signed up to the scheme. The objectives of the TA will dovetail with those of the counterpart. Both will be managed by the supervising line manager.

3.5 Coverage of the scheme

The scheme will be available to HQ, Zones, CH and district management staff of Grade G and above. At the moment the establishment of this group numbers 220. Not all posts are filled and some individuals will not wish to sign up to the scheme but if they did the basic cost of salary enhancement would be \$2.64m per year.

4 Costs

The salary enhancements could cost a maximum of \$2.64m. but will probably cost about \$1.8m. The scheme would require 3 senior managers to run the scheme who will manage the scheme and contribute to each annual individual performance review. Management costs will be \$100,000 per year. Transport, communications and other administration costs would be about \$100,000 pa. The scheme will therefore cost \$2m per year. The benefits will be measured in the success of the next SWAp and can be compared with SWAp1 success, other health SWAp in other countries, in the cumulative success or failure of IPRs, and the turnover and retention of senior staff.

5 Conclusion

Action is required to reverse the common finding in MOHs in Africa of dedicated senior staff, demoralised and overworked due to

1. a small proportion of posts filled by correctly qualified staff
2. rapid turnover and loss of good staff to NGOs and other organisations
3. limited personal incentives to encourage the difficult decisions needed to implement new policies.

This scheme to strengthen policy implementation capacity could reverse this situation which exists in Malawi. Imagine the day when staff are individually committed to implement their part of the POW2 over the 5 year period, when personal and corporate incentives are sufficient to promote this commitment and when TAs find that there is demand for their skills to be transferred to help individuals meet their performance targets.

References

1. Ministry of Health, Health SWAp Donor Group, GTZ: **Human Resources - Capacity Development within the Health Sector - Needs Assessment Study [Internet]**. Lilongwe, Malawi, 2007[cited 2009 Sep 15] Available from: http://www.medcol.mw/commhealth/publications/national%20research/Malawi_HealthSWAp_HR-CD-NeedsAssessment_GTZ_FinalReport_v09.pdf

6 Appendix 1

Fellowship scheme - Malawi

Individual Performance Review (IPR) Guidelines

1. **What is IPR?**

Individual Performance Review is an ongoing process that helps job holders to:

- be clear about what job performance is expected of them
- receive feedback from their manager, in the light of this
- identify and agree their own and the college's training and development needs

The purpose of IPR is to:

- clarify job remit
- acknowledge good performance
- improve the performance of individuals and teams so that the organisation can achieve its strategic and operational objectives and become more successful as a result
- improve two-way communications
- acknowledge the CPD activity undertaken during the year
- improve the effectiveness of what we do
- improve the quality of working lives.

As such it is an ideal method of assessing the performance of fellows and will be used in the scheme.

2. **What are the main features of IPR?**

The main features of IPR are:

(a) Agreement in Writing

IPR is based on an agreement in writing between the fellow and their mentors. This is about the purpose of the job and what agreed objectives the fellow plans to achieve in the next 12 months. This is 'Job Clarification'. Another important feature of the IPR process is that it requires the fellows and their mentors to discuss and formalise a Training and Development Action Plan. It will detail the personal development needs of the fellow.

(b) Discussion

The clarification of job objectives is put in writing only after one or more discussions between fellow and institutional mentor. These discussions should be two-way i.e. it is not for either party to 'steamroller' an agreement. If the fellow is going to achieve what has been agreed, he or she will need to be committed to it. In the last resort (and after full discussion), what the mentor says must count, because he or she has wider responsibilities than an individual fellow. However, should a fellow be unhappy about any decisions made their mentor, they can raise the matter with their mentor's manager, the academic mentor or the Director of Fellowship Scheme.

(c) Objectives

In the IPR context an objective is a statement that describes an important

activity and outcome crucial to the effective performance of their job. Normally, a fellow will have 4 – 6 objectives to tackle in a year. There is no minimum number. The number of objectives should be determined by their complexity. Typically, a fellow's objectives will have a maximum time span of about one year (although some objectives will of course have a time span of much less than that). However, it is recognised that certain objectives will have a time span of the full two years of the fellowship period. IPR caters for such objectives because annual milestones should be easily agreed which will enable all parties to assess performance within the annual IPR cycle. Objectives can be derived from the organisation's concept paper, statement business or strategic plan.

(d) Role of the Academic Supervisor

The written list of objectives are agreed and countersigned by the academic supervisor. The academic supervisor is to oversee the process (making sure it happens, is being taken seriously and that reasonable judgements are being formed). In addition they may be required in a counselling role, in circumstances where there is substantial disagreement. To do this well, they have to have some contact with the individual and be aware of their main objectives.

The success of IPR depends on it being accepted as fair and equitable, the role of the academic supervisor is important. Each fellow is appraised by the mentors with whom their personal objectives were originally agreed.

(e) Monitoring

During the following 12 month period – the IPR 'year' – the mentor and fellow should hold quarterly discussions to monitor and review progress. The original IPR form should be used which saves repetition and guarantees continuity.

Monitoring meetings may result in objectives and implementation plans being changed because outside circumstances have changed – "someone moved the goalposts".

Outside the formal monitoring meeting referred to above, some meetings will be informal – perhaps just a phone call – to keep in touch and provide support, coaching or counselling.

(f) Performance Review

IPR should involve 'no end of year surprises'. At the end of the 12 month IPR review period, the final IPR stage comes into play – the Annual Performance Review. In contrast to most appraisals, where the manager sits in judgement, IPR enables the job holder him/herself to be clear about whether objectives have been met, and if not, the reasons. The fellow and mentors reflect on the past year's performance and the fellow completes the IPR form in readiness to exchange forms at least five days prior to the IPR.

3. 'Who does What' – to make IPR work?

(a) The Objectives Setting Meeting

- Before the objective setting meeting, the fellow is to complete the Individual Performance Review (IPR) form. This form is to be shared at least 5 days before the meeting.

- At the same time the academic mentor prepares an assessment of the fellow's competencies following informal discussions.
- At the meeting the fellow and mentors discuss and modify the objectives and timelines. This becomes the objectives for the first year of the two year fellowship period. This is amended at the meeting and signed by all three individuals. At the same time the training needs are agreed, signed off by all three and sent to the Fellowship director for inclusion in the training programme.

(b) Quarterly review meetings

- Before the quarterly meetings the fellow is to complete the IPR form with his/her assessment of performance. This form is to be shared at least 5 days before the meeting.
- At the meeting the fellow and mentors discuss the performance and the institutional mentor completes his section of the form. The academic mentor completes the training needs section of the form.
- All forms are signed by all participants and sent to the Fellowship Office.

(c) Annual review meeting

- Before the annual meetings the fellow is to complete the IPR form with his/her assessment of performance. This form is to be shared at least 5 days before the meeting.
- At the meeting the fellow and mentors discuss the performance and agree new objectives if appropriate. The fellow completes this section.
- The institutional mentor completes his section of the form. The academic mentor completes the training needs section of the form. The two mentors undertake a performance rating using the following:-
 - (a) Outstanding – Consistently far exceeds expectations.
 - (b) Above Expectations - Consistently meets and frequently exceeds expectations.
 - (c) Meets Expectations - Consistently meets and occasionally exceeds expectations.
 - (d) Below Expectations - Occasionally fails to meet expectations.
 - (e) Needs Improvement - Frequently fails to meet expectations.
- All forms are signed by all participants and sent to the Fellowship Office.

4. What's IPR not about?

- Paperwork for the sake of paperwork – the benefits of IPR arise through discussions; the paperwork is simply to provide a guide and record.
- Objectives sitting in desk drawers – the paperwork is a working document that needs to be referred to regularly to make sure the initial plans are being met.
- IPR is about improving the effectiveness of what we do: “working smarter not harder”.
- Writing ‘perfect’ objectives. If what you and your mentor have written works for you, then go with it! IPR is there to assist you, not as an end in itself.

5. How do you write objectives?

- Keep the number of objectives between 4 and 6 – more and you will dilute

your efforts by spreading them over too wide an area. Don't clutter up your list with trivia.

- Make sure that those objectives outline all the main activity areas – major outcomes – of your job. Your aim is to prepare a true representation of your job, also you don't want to devote time and energy on something you're not being credited for.
- Make sure that the objectives relate to the key objectives of the organisation and that they cover activities you are personally responsible for.
- Don't be too ambitious (you'll get frustrated) or too conservative (agree a plan that's worth going for).
- State the objective and the actions for its implementation as clearly as you can, with success criteria, dates, and responsibility for action if possible.
- Be clear about how you and your mentor will know you've been successful during, and at the end of the year.
- Make sure the objectives are clear, and agreed between you and your mentor. Don't be ambiguous – it'll be harder for you and your mentor to judge progress at the year end.
- Ensure that the resources to do what you agreed are noted and discussed at the outset – time, money, personal development etc.
- Remember to keep objectives "SMART". Objectives should be:
Specific Measurable Achievable Realistic Time bound

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