



MANIFEST

ISSUE BRIEF

Issue Brief No 06

February 2016

Health Workers Recognition as a tool for Increasing Motivation

KEY MESSAGES

District health leaders and managers can identify and implement appropriate and affordable incentive schemes for health workers in order to improve productivity and the quality of services



Health workers of Kamuge Health Centre III in Pallisa district being recognised during one of the Symposia we held (Image Credit: Kakaire Kirunda)

The Issue

Health workers especially in developing countries such as Uganda are accused of having a poor attitude towards their clients resulting in poor service uptake. Despite attempts to improve health service delivery, for instance the construction of more health facilities and improved supplies management, the issue of health worker motivation continues to be a major factor. The World Health Report 2000 defines incentives for health workers as “all the rewards and punishments that providers face as a consequence of the organizations in which they work, the institutions under which they operate, and the specific interventions they provide”. Both financial and non financial incentives are needed and the non financial incentives may include continuous encouragement and appropriate recognition.

According to Abduljawad Asaad et al, “workers in general (even the most dedicated) thrive on constant encouragement, effective rewards and suitable recognition. Rewards tend to motivate people to do more and to do it better or continue to do it better. Without rewards, workers tend to lose interest in excelling and innovating. If not properly recognised, they will lose their enthusiasm for perfection and that will in turn diminish their morale and happiness. It is documented that unhappy employees are less productive, but worse still they will negatively affect the satisfaction of their clients.”

Our Recommendation:

District health leaders and managers need to identify and implement appropriate and affordable incentive schemes for health workers in order to improve productivity and the quality of services.

The motivation of health workers in Uganda is indeed supported by regulatory guidelines and the Ugandan Human Resources for Health Motivation and Retention Strategy aims at 'strengthening the capacity of the health system to improve the attraction, retention, equitable distribution and performance of the health workers' (MOH, 2008). Moreover, the decentralized structure of service delivery in the country also gives district leaders a mandate to motivate their health workers.

The MANIFEST Experience

Recognising and rewarding the best performing health workers and facilities as a way of motivating them was one of the activities under the Health Systems Strengthening component of the MANIFEST Study. Eight health worker symposia –at which the best were recognised and rewarded - were conducted over 24 months of implementation. Organising each symposium cost us an average of 5 million Uganda Shillings.

The best performing health facilities were chosen based on the support supervision scores. Meanwhile, health workers scored each other on a number of maternal and newborn related performance indicators. The best two and one most improved in six months in a hospital and or Health Centre IV were awarded. Health workers in the best performing facilities received certificates and individual awards which were mainly solar lights. The best facilities were also recognised with certificates during the symposia, which also gave the best performers an opportunity to share their experiences. In total, 24 health workers were recognised through the 8 symposia.

“Personally I am very grateful for the work that has been done for Kamuge Health Centre. My staffs are very motivated with the skills and knowledge; at least two staff members were given solar lights and the facility was also given a solar light; we have got electricity which is on and off. Those lights help us so much especially at night. We are very grateful for the mentorship and for the support in general”- Facility In-charge in Pallisa District

Key Lessons

From these symposia, we have learnt that for such an incentive scheme to work, the following facilitators are critical:

- A recognition scheme has to be manageable and sustainable in terms of organisation and costs. It should fall within a manageable budget.
- The open recognition has to be based on a sound system of performance measurements that is both comprehensive and valid. The process should be seen to be fair to all.
- The rewards should be deemed valuable otherwise the health workers may lose interest and fail to work towards the desired goal.
- Not all reward systems are applicable to all contexts. For effectiveness, health worker recognition schemes must be contextually appropriate, customised, well-focused and suitable to a particular setting.
- Due to resource constraints and bureaucracy in the public sector, it requires strong leadership and creativity to get started.

According to literature (Zurn, 2003), a range of non-financial incentives including the following could be explored; as a package or alone.

- Vacation days
- Flexible working hours
- Access to training and education
- Sabbatical and study leave
- Planned career breaks
- Functional and professional autonomy
- Technical support and feedback systems
- Transparent reward systems
- Expression of verbal appreciation by the organization



Sr Mary Amongin (left) of Kamuli General Hospital being recognised for exceptional performance on the maternity ward (Image Credit: Kakaire Kirunda)

References:

- WHO. (2000). The World Health Report 2000
- MoH. (2010). 2nd National Health Plan
- Abduljawad, A., & Al-Assaf, A. F. (2011). Incentives for Better Performance in Health Care. Sultan Qaboos University Medical Journal, 11(2), 201–206.
- MOH. (2008). Motivation and retention strategy for Human resources for health October 2008, Ministry of Health, Kampala Uganda.
- MakSPH. (2013). MANIFEST Implementation Plan
- Zurn, P. (2003). “Incentives for Human Resource Management.” Paper presented at the Workshop on Human Resource for Health Development: The Joint Learning Initiative, Veyrier-du-Lac, France, May 8–10.

About MANIFEST

MANIFEST was a 4 year study (2012-2015) involving the Makerere University School of Public Health and the districts of Kamuli, Pallisa and Kibuku. The study was funded by Comic Relief with technical assistance from the Future Health Systems Research Consortium. We used a participatory action research approach, in which the different stakeholders worked as partners rather than study subjects. In 2012, we engaged various stakeholders in the design of a sustainable and scalable intervention aimed at improving maternal and newborn health outcomes. The resulting design had three major components, with district health teams leading on their implementation. The components included:

- Community Mobilization and Sensitization
- Savings and Transport
- Health Systems Strengthening

Credits

Author/s: Mr. Kakaire Ayub Kirunda, Dr. Suzanne Kiwanuka

Study Team Leader: Dr Elizabeth Ekirapa-Kiracho

Contact: ekky@musph.ac.ug



Knowledge Translation Network Africa
SUPPORTING TRANSLATION OF HEALTH SYSTEMS
EVIDENCE INTO POLICY & ACTION ACROSS
SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA



Makerere University School of Public Health
MakSPH Building, New Mulago Hospital Complex
Tel: +256414 543872 Email: ekky@musph.ac.ug

This brief was produced as part of the Maternal and Neonatal Implementation for Equitable Systems (MANIFEST) study's communications and advocacy strategic activities. Special thanks to our stakeholders, among others the UK charity Comic Relief for the financial support. Thanks also go to the Knowledge Translation Network Africa and the Future Health Systems Research Consortium which is funded by the UK Department for International Development, for the technical assistance.