Strengthening decentralised HRM to improve health workforce performance

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Rationale for PERFORM initiative

• Need to **improve workforce performance** to support UHC
• Integrated **Human Resources & Health Systems approach** required (de Savigny and Adams 2017)
• In decentralised contexts, **district managers best placed** to organise integrated approaches – due to their “decision space” and proximity to communities served
• **Untapped potential** from facilitating that DHMTs plan more strategically/act in a more “entrepreneurial” manner
• DHMT management strengthening not new, but lack of attention to political economy and **little research on the process and effects**
What did the PERFORM Initiative do?

• Introduced a “Management Strengthening Intervention” through an Action Research approach

• Equipped health managers in selected districts in Ghana, Tanzania and Uganda with managerial skills and tools to:
  o analyse greatest problems
  o develop, implement and monitor integrated Human Resource/Health System strategies for responding to them
What is an Action Research Approach?
Results:
Management Competencies Strengthened

Root causes of problems and prioritisation

- Greater **depth**
- Importance of **small problems** which could often be solved by easily but made a big difference – the problems within systems
- “If you do not do the **problem tree analysis** you will be doing things randomly and without clear objectives” (Manager Tanzania).
Results:

Strategy Design and Resourcing

Human Resources/ Health System integration

- Strategies designed to **increase service coverage** included efforts to improve **Human Resources Management**
- Use of **selection criteria** e.g. potential to incorporate into regular budget or external funding
- Identifying a **proxy indicator** that is routinely collected
Results:
Integrated HR/Health Systems Strategies

• In Ghana and Tanzania, strategies contributed to improvements in equitable service coverage and drug availability as reflected by health worker perceptions, backed by HMIS data.

• In Uganda, strategies to strengthen supervision/on the job learning and to organize staff presence/absence were associated with a documented decline in absenteeism, higher levels of communication and reported increases in productivity.
Follow-up during implementation phase

- Competing agendas
- Facilitating reflection
- Monitoring
- Courage to “course correct”

- Empowerment: *these are our problems, we can solve them*
- Initiative – risk-taking culture
- Fostered collaboration through regular, focused meetings
- Application to other areas of work

Inter-district meeting, Uganda
Selected lessons from PERFORM project

• PERFORM strengthened management skills by building competencies in **problem analysis, design and implementation** of **integrated HR/HS strategies** for improved health workforce performance;

• Stimulated “targeted” planning, use of (disaggregated) data, **lobbying for resources**;

• **Increased ownership** - determination to implement

• Critical – though challenging- to ensure the **reflection** part of the Action Research cycle takes place:

• **Action Research Toolkit**:  
From **PERFORM** To **PERFORM 2SCALE**

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- Countries involved:
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  - Uganda
  - Malawi
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Contact details for further dialogue

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