

Briefing No. 2

## The missing link

### Building critical management capacity for the health workforce

The acute shortage of health workers in sub-Saharan Africa requires a dramatic increase in the training of new workers. However, if such trained staff is to be retained and used efficiently then the management skills and capacity of health systems like that in Tanzania must be greatly improved. The Touch Foundation is working with the Tanzanian government and with one of the country's largest teaching hospitals and medical universities in an effort to create a well-managed health system, efficiently using resources that do exist to save more lives.

#### THE CRISIS

Tanzania has one of the most acute health worker shortages in the world. Its workforce of 26,000 is roughly 84,000 workers short of being able to provide the basic level of healthcare recommended by World Health Organization. Even as the country seeks to double health worker training, there is a pressing need to ensure that existing staff are used to the greatest possible effect. Currently, many health institutions are managed by the very health professionals who are so desperately needed to treat patients or train new staff.

This situation is compounded by the relative lack of formal management training which health professionals receive. Consequently professors, doctors and nurses are contending with burdensome bureaucracy while at the same time the hospital, clinic or medical college suffers for lack of sound financial planning, procurement processes or support systems. Equally, retention of health workers suffers for lack of appropriate workforce management and planning.

Responding to this problem, the Tanzanian health ministry has identified development of management capacity as a central goal for the period from 2008 until 2013. In particular, the ministry has highlighted the need to build capacity in the areas of data collection and analysis, recruitment and placement of health workers, and workforce management and policy planning.

#### THE CHALLENGE

Such management challenges would be difficult to resolve in a well-resourced health system in Europe or North America. In a developing country context, such challenges are of an order of magnitude greater. Precarious funding of health institutions for decades – together with piecemeal aid programs – have exacerbated the problems and led to familiar anecdotes about clinics being built but not staffed or equipped, medical equipment donated without instructions, key accessories or indeed the very power supply needed to run them, or failure to pay salaries to health workers for months or years who are then forced to look for other work.

It is clear that in many health institutions, particularly hospitals and training institutions, there is a need to improve specific management skills of staff but also to strengthen the management and leadership of the

institution as a whole. For example, improving specific accounting and procurement skills of appropriate staff will ensure that limited resources are well-marshaled and appropriately allocated. Improved management and leadership skills will ensure effective strategic planning, appropriate oversight and reduction of corruption and improved governance – all critical if more patients are to be treated more efficiently.

Clearly the need for improved and expanded management capacity also exists at the national and regional governmental level. One of the greatest challenges for any government is taking broad policy decisions and refining these into strategic and then operational plans. This challenge is very much greater when data and evidence from across the country is unreliable or nonexistent.

### **THE ROLE OF THE TOUCH FOUNDATION**

The Touch Foundation is working across all levels of the health system in Tanzania to strengthen health management capacity. At the request of the Tanzanian government we have conducted diagnostic studies on the health care system and health care training facilities, both regionally and across the country. Moreover, we assisted the government by providing a strategic plan for each individual training institution that would assist the government to implement the required expansion of training places.

At Weill Bugando's university – the second largest medical school in Tanzania – we provide the leaders of both the university and teaching hospital with management capacity and assistance particularly that relates to finances, facilities management, reporting processes and the development of a performance management system. In short, we are providing support and expertise usually associated with management consultancy firms but reinforced and informed by our presence on the ground in Tanzania.

### **TAKING ACTION**

We work closely with governments, companies, foundations and many individual supporters to create practical and effective solutions to the healthcare crisis in sub-Saharan Africa. To find out what part you can play in this work please contact Lee Wells, Director of External Affairs, on +44 (0) 207 961 5629 or by email to [lee\\_wells@mckinsey.com](mailto:lee_wells@mckinsey.com).

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