



success story

Strengthening Local Capacity, Improving Regional Outcomes

The Need

Access to expert technical assistance is critical to solving West Africa's most pressing health problems. While technical assistance has historically been provided by outside experts and organizations, homegrown African organizations that provide essential advice and services are growing at an impressive rate.

With such rapid expansion, some of these technical assistance organizations have found that they lack critical skill sets and strong infrastructures. These organizations require management guidance and advice to instill effective administrative, financial, and planning methods that help organizations remain sustainable and responsive to local clients' practices.

Based on these needs, Action for West Africa Region-Reproductive Health (AWARE-RH), a project funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), is providing vital technical assistance in organizational management to regional agencies.

The AWARE Approach

AWARE-RH has facilitated a participatory process that includes an organizational assessment of strengths and weaknesses and involvement in developing detailed plans to address key issues. Specifically, the process consists of the following steps:



1. Assessing key technical and management issues as part of a participatory process;
2. Prioritizing challenges to organizational effectiveness, followed by strategic planning to address these challenges;
3. Implementing strategic plans, with assistance and training from AWARE-RH; and
4. Receiving ongoing mentoring and coaching from AWARE-RH throughout the implementation process.

AWARE-RH offers assistance in a variety of areas, including business planning; marketing; monitoring and evaluation; financial and human resource systems; proposal writing; consulting techniques; and leadership development. Having been equipped with greater skills in management, planning, and implementation, organizations are empowered to improve their performance and to attract more funding and clients.

Results

To date, AWARE-RH has helped six regional technical assistance organizations strengthen their management capacity. These organizations are now better able to deliver essential advice and



services in family planning, child health, and policy and advocacy for health reform. They have also learned to effectively market themselves to garner funding from various donors.

For example, with support in proposal design from AWARE-RH, CEFOREP, a technical leadership organization, recently secured funding from the German government for a study of knowledge, attitudes, and practices in Senegal. CEFOREP has also improved and expanded its postabortion care activities in the Cape Verde Islands, Chad, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, and Togo. Overall, with the assistance of AWARE-RH, CEFOREP has increased its health-related business activities from 4.6 person-weeks of consultancy in 2005 to more than 78 person-weeks in 2007.

MWANGAZA, another technical leadership organization based in Burkina Faso, has experienced similar success after receiving training in organizational development from AWARE-RH. Recently awarded five new

“[CEFOREP’s work] is the only successful example I know of partnership and collaboration between [donors], a research institution of the South, and the Ministry of Health.”

*—Prof. Vincent de Brouwere, Prince Leopold
Institute of Tropical Medicine, Belgium*

international contracts, MWANGAZA has also boosted its technical assistance rate from 15 person-weeks of assistance in 2005 to 42 person-weeks in 2007. Previously, MWANGAZA worked mainly in Burkina Faso, but since receiving support from AWARE-RH, its portfolio has expanded to include Cameroon, Mauritania, Niger, and Togo.

Lessons Learned

By helping regional organizations assess their own strengths and weaknesses in organizational management, AWARE-RH is building strong local organizations that can effectively respond to the health challenges of West Africa. Some important lessons learned include:

- Technical assistance is more effective when managed within a responsive administrative and management framework.
- By applying locally the lessons learned from international partners, efficiently managed regional organizations bring important value to national health programs.
- Sound management capacity and reliability are important criteria for potential clients as they seek out technical assistance from regional organizations.

For more information about AWARE-RH’s work in strengthening organizational capacity, please contact Mamadou Ba at mba@aware-rh.org.

AWARE-RH (Action for West Africa Region - Reproductive Health) is a five-year, USAID-sponsored health improvement project designed to improve access to health care and quality of services in 21 West African countries. Guided by a vision of strong, relevant, and sustainable regional health institutions and networks, AWARE-RH proactively assists national and cross-border health programs in developing quality services that meet the needs of their people. To learn more about AWARE-RH, please visit www.aware-rh.org.