INTRODUCTION

In 2002, the Egypt Ministry of Health and Population faced the challenge of improving access to and quality of services in rural Upper Egypt in the face of low morale among health workers and managers. From 1992 to 2000, the Ministry, with donor support, had succeeded in reducing the nationwide maternal mortality rate by 52%. Nevertheless, a gap remained between urban and rural areas.

CASE DESCRIPTION

In 2002, the Ministry, with funding from the United States Agency for International Development and assistance from Management Sciences for Health, introduced a Leadership Development Programme (LDP) in Aswan Governorate. The programme aimed to improve health services in three districts by increasing managers’ ability to create high performing teams and lead them to achieve results. The programme introduced leadership and management practices and a methodology for identifying and addressing service delivery challenges. Ten teams of health workers participated.

DISCUSSION AND EVALUATION

In 2003, after participation in the LDP, the districts of Aswan, Daraw and Kom Ombo increased the number of new family planning visits by 36%, 68% and 20%, respectively. The
number of prenatal and postpartum visits also rose. After the United States funding ended, local doctors and nurses scaled up the programme to 184 health care facilities (training more than 1,000 health workers). From 2005 to 2007, the Leadership Development Programme participants in Aswan Governorate focused on reducing the maternal mortality rate as their annual goal. They reduced it from 85.0 per 100,000 live births to 35.5 per 100,000. The reduction in maternal mortality rate was much greater than in similar governorates in Egypt. Managers and teams across Aswan demonstrated their ability to scale up effective public health interventions though their increased commitment and ownership of service challenges.

CONCLUSIONS

When teams learn and apply empowering leadership and management practices, they can transform the way they work together and develop their own solutions to complex public health challenges. Committed health teams can use local resources to scale up effective public health interventions.

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