

The Manager

CASE SCENARIOS FOR TRAINING AND GROUP DISCUSSION

Barishahi District Plans to Strengthen Its Gender Perspective

The Barishahi District Health Officer, Dr. Tareq Islam, and his deputy, Dr. Suhanaa Hossain, greeted Dr. Wahid Ahmed, Provincial Health Officer. A month ago, Dr. Ahmed forwarded a central-level directive calling for all district reproductive health programs to strengthen the gender perspective in their services and management practices. Dr. Hossain prepared for Dr. Ahmed's visit by analyzing the office's service data for sexually transmitted infection (STI) services, reviewing the office's management practices, and sending Dr. Ahmed her report.

"Your report contains some interesting findings," began Dr. Ahmed. "For example, the clients for your STI services are almost exclusively women. As for your management practices, men consistently receive higher salaries than women do for the same job. And even though you have more women than men on your staff, men hold most of the supervisory positions."

"My analysis also brought out some inequities for male staff," said Dr. Hossain. "For instance, the national program provides female employees with three months of maternity leave to stay home with a newborn. But there is no paternity leave policy for men."

"It seems to me that we must focus on ourselves first," said Dr. Islam.

"We have chosen Barishahi as one of the first districts to implement this directive because of your excellent performance in improving women's access to reproductive health services," said Dr. Ahmed. "Your leadership in partnering with local nongovernmental organizations and encouraging religious leaders to talk

about reproductive health has served as a model for other districts. We are counting on you to serve as a model for this directive, too."

"Only when we have strengthened the gender perspective in both our management practices and our services can we truly be a model for other offices and for the communities we serve," said Dr. Islam. "But I am unclear about how we may best proceed."

"Trainers hired by the Central Office will come here to lead gender training workshops for your staff," said Dr. Ahmed. "Topics will include concepts and terms related to gender, how to conduct a gender analysis, and how to identify obstacles at the individual, household, and community levels. After the workshop, your staff will be ready to do a gender analysis and identify your goals, strategies, and priorities for this initiative."

"We have much work to do," said Dr. Islam. "We appreciate your support and collaboration."

A few days later, Dr. Islam addressed his staff. "The Provincial Office has asked us to take the lead in an initiative to strengthen the gender perspective in the national reproductive health program. This is both an honor and a challenge. Starting today, we are making a major commitment to this initiative."

The room buzzed in reaction to the news. "What do you mean, a gender perspective?" asked Dr. Kodus Faruque, Medical Officer. "We have already done a great deal to increase women's access to our services. Doesn't this show that we are paying attention to gender issues?"

Case Scenario: Barishahi District Strengthens Its Gender Perspective

“Paying attention to gender means looking at the ability of both men and women to make decisions about their reproductive health throughout their lives,” replied Dr. Islam. “It means adjusting our services so they contribute to equitable social and economic development for all. And it means looking at ourselves—our management practices and attitudes related to gender.”

“For example,” asked Dr. Hossain, “how many men here have ever taken leave to stay home and care for a sick child?” The room was silent as people saw no hands raised. “How many women have taken leave to stay home with a sick child?” All but two women raised their hands.

Dr. Faruque gave a slight smile. “I guess that proves your point,” he said.

“Beginning next month,” Dr. Hossain continued, “trainers sent by the Central Office will facilitate gender workshops for all staff. We will establish teams to do a gender analysis of our community, our services, and our internal policies, practices, and systems. The analysis will help us identify aspects of gender that are relevant to our context.”

“Will the gender analysis help us assess the needs and interests of our clients and the gender-related

obstacles they face in using our services?” asked the Information Officer.

“Yes,” replied Dr. Islam. “For example, we know that very few men use our STI services. The gender analysis may help us identify obstacles that men face in using these services and help us determine how best to adjust our services or add new ones.”

“What types of goals do you expect we will establish for this initiative?” asked Dr. Faruque.

“We will establish both service and management practice goals based on our assessments,” replied Dr. Islam. “One service goal might be to increase the number of men who come to us for STI diagnosis and treatment. A management practice goal might be to increase the number of women in supervisory positions.”

“This is an opportunity for us to build on our success in increasing women’s access to reproductive health services,” he continued. “It is also an opportunity for us to continue to be catalysts for change in our communities. Dr. Hossain and I are excited about this new initiative. We hope that as you learn more, you will become excited, too.”

Case Discussion Questions

- 1. Why was the Barishahi District Health Office chosen as one of the first districts to implement the initiative to strengthen the gender perspective in the reproductive health program? What has the office been doing already that has prepared them for this step?**
- 2. What service and management practice goals regarding gender have been suggested for the office so far? What are some other goals the staff might consider?**
- 3. In light of the discussion about goals, what strategies and activities could the District Office undertake to strengthen the gender perspective in both its services and management practices?**

Case Analysis: Barishahi District Strengthens Its Gender Perspective

1. Why was the Barishahi District Health Office chosen as one of the first districts to implement the initiative to strengthen the gender perspective in the reproductive health program? What has the office been doing already that has prepared them for this step?

The Provincial Office has chosen the Barishahi District Health Office to begin this strengthened gender effort because it has already served as a leader for other offices in improving women's access to reproductive health programs.

Other elements that make this district a likely candidate for initiating the strengthened gender perspective effort include:

- The office's leaders are willing to make a commitment to strengthening the office's gender perspective and using a gender perspective to look at their attitudes, services, and management practices.
- The District Office is already coordinating with the types of community partners, such as local nongovernmental organizations and religious leaders, who could potentially be important partners in this initiative.
- Once staff training is complete, the leaders are prepared to assign teams to do a gender analysis of the office's context, services, and management systems, and base the office's goals and strategies on these assessments.

2. What service and management practice goals regarding gender have been suggested for the office so far? What are some other goals the staff might consider?

A service goal suggested in the case scenario is to increase the number of men who come to the District Office's clinics for STI diagnosis and treatment.

Other possible service goals might include:

- Increase men's knowledge of STIs.
- Reduce the incidence of HIV/AIDS among both men and women.
- Improve the ability of women to negotiate condom use with their sexual partners.
- Increase the involvement of men in their partner's reproductive health.

Some management practice goals suggested in the case scenario include:

- Increase the number of women in supervisory positions.
- Make the compensation system more equitable. (The District Office may not have the power to adjust its compensation system if the national program sets policy in this area.)
- Establish a policy providing paternity leave for male staff. (The District Office may not have the power to adjust its benefits policy if the national program sets policy in this area.)

Other possible management practice goals might include:

- Initiate discussion groups for female staff that give them a voice on important issues.
- Revise the office's mission statement so it affirms a commitment to both women and men in the communities served.
- Provide adequate funding levels for strengthening the gender perspective in the program.

Case Analysis: Barishahi District Strengthens Its Gender Perspective

3. In light of the discussion about goals, what strategies and activities could the District Office undertake to strengthen the gender perspective in both its services and management practices?

Strategies and activities suggested for strengthening the gender perspective in its services include:

- Identify obstacles that men face in using District Office STI services and determine how best to adjust the existing services or add new ones.
- Adjust services so they contribute to equitable social and economic development for all.
- Develop goals, strategies, and priority activities based on assessments.

Based on the assessments, the office might consider other service-related strategies and activities, such as:

- Extending clinic hours in order to serve adolescents and working men and women;
- Establishing a dependable system to ensure that supplies are always available to serve the needs of both men and women;
- Adjusting fees to avoid financial barriers to access and use by female or male clients;
- Expanding the types of reproductive health services offered.

Strategies and activities suggested for strengthening the gender perspective in its management practices include:

- Increase staff understanding of gender issues by providing gender training.
- Conduct a gender analysis of the office's community context, services, management systems, and staff attitudes related to gender.

Based on the assessments, the office might consider other management practice strategies and activities, such as:

- Building partnerships with community organizations to advocate for change in women's status or rights;
- Looking at the way staff gather and use information on their services and clients, and compiling regular monthly or quarterly service reports;
- Conducting research on the acceptability and effectiveness of male or female service personnel;
- Providing information sessions on gender and reproductive health in the community;
- Improving the communication skills of staff so they can improve the ability of women to negotiate family planning use with their partners.