A Guide to

Identifying and Documenting Best Practices in Family Planning Programmes

World Health Organization
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR Africa

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Acronyms

AFRO	WHO Regional Office for Africa
AIDS	acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
DOTS	directly observed treatment, short-course
ECSA HC	East, Central, and Southern African Health Community
FP	family planning
KM	knowledge management
MoH	Ministry of Health
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
HIP	High Impact Practices
IBP	Implementing Best Practices Initiative
TB	tuberculosis
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WAHO	West African Health Organization
WHO	World Health Organization

Background

One of the five core functions of the World Health Organization (WHO) is shaping the research agenda and stimulating the generation, dissemination and application of knowledge. This function underscores the importance of knowledge for formulating health strategies at both the national and global levels for the efficient performance of health systems. WHO recognizes the importance of knowledge management methods and tools in the performance of this core function to improve effectiveness and efficiency. The WHO Regional Committee for Africa at its Fifty-sixth Session in 2006 adopted strategic directions and a related resolution on knowledge management (KM).[1,2] The strategic directions seek to contribute to the improvement of health systems performance and health outcomes through effective KM in health. The resolution recognizes that KM is about providing the right knowledge for the right people (i.e. policy-makers, practitioners, health systems managers and the public) and in the right format to strengthen health systems and improve health outcomes.

One of the specific objectives of the strategic directions is to maximize the impact of explicit and tacit knowledge, including health research and experiential knowledge, through effective knowledge-sharing and application. Countries are expected to benefit tremendously from exchanging experiences and hard-won solutions with one another. However, one of the significant barriers to knowledge-sharing and reapplication of experience is the limited culture of information and knowledge documentation and sharing. Although relevant knowledge may exist in people's minds, it cannot always be tapped or it may exist in formats that limit people's ability to know about it or find it. This underscores the need for decision-makers, health professionals, communities and WHO staff to be able to find, use and share knowledge on experiences of what works and lessons learned.

There are two documents guiding the documentation of best practices, which are currently used in Africa: the WHO Regional Office for Africa *Guide for documenting and sharing "best practices" in health programmes,*[3] and the *Guide for documenting good practice*[4] developed by the West African Health Organization (WAHO), Implementing Best Practices (IBP) Initiative, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW).[5] The WHO Regional Office for Africa guide was developed to disseminate a series of country experiences on the planning, implementation, and monitoring of health programmes and services that can be considered as "best practices." At the same time, the IBP Initiative has been working with WAHO to prepare and disseminate a "Good practices in public health" document[4] through their Good Practice Forum. The IBP Initiative's secretariat is based in the WHO's Department of Reproductive Health and Research, and currently manages a

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