

Systems Strengthening for Sustainable Family Planning Service Provision in Uganda

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Abstract : Context: The study focuses on the sustainability of health interventions in Uganda, particularly in the private sector, beyond donor-funded project periods. The Population Services International (PSI) implemented the Women Health Project (WHP) to ensure continued access to quality family planning, cervical cancer screening, and post-abortion care services through private clinics. Research Aim: The aim of the study is to assess the continued access to quality family planning, cervical cancer screening, and post-abortion care services through the private sector after the closure or reduction in funding of the WHP. Methodology: PSI trained and mentored 83 clinics to establish functional systems in self-regulatory quality improvement, supply chain, referral, and demand creation. The clinics were also connected to the national reporting system and utilized Ministry of Health reporting tools. An assessment tool with six criteria was designed and used to evaluate the progress of the clinics. Clinics scoring 75% and above were considered independent and graduated from the program. Findings: Out of the 83 private clinics, 56 successfully met the graduation criteria and graduated from the program, while 25 lost interest and were gradually dropped. Two clinics failed to achieve the criteria due to leadership challenges. The 59 graduating clinics continued to provide high-quality family planning services, including IUD, implant, Depo-Provera, oral contraceptives, and post-abortion care. All graduating clinics were reassessed and found to still be capable of offering services, attributing their success to government stock availability and acquired skills through mentorships. The clinics expressed appreciation to PSI for the sustainable plan that allowed them to operate beyond the project period. Theoretical Importance: This study contributes to the understanding of sustainability planning and the importance of clinic owners' attitudes and buy-in for continued service provision. It emphasizes the implementation of sustainability plans through existing structures to leverage available resources and ensure continuity of care. Data Collection and Analysis Procedures: The study collected data through the assessment tool that evaluated the progress of clinics based on the established criteria. The tool was scored out of 100%, and clinics scoring above 75% were deemed independent. The findings were analyzed quantitatively to determine the success rate of clinics in meeting the graduation criteria. Questions Addressed: The study addresses the question of whether private clinics in Uganda can sustain the provision of family planning, cervical cancer screening, and post-abortion care services after the closure or reduction in funding of the WHP. Conclusion: The study concludes that the attitude and buy-in of clinic owners are essential for sustainability planning. Implementing sustainability plans through existing structures and leveraging available resources are crucial for the continuity of care after the end of a project or reduced funding. The findings highlight the importance of establishing sustainable plans to ensure continued access to essential health services beyond the project period. Contributions: This study contributes to the existing knowledge for programmers implementing or intending to implement donor-funded projects. It provides insights into designing sustainable plans that enable the independent operation of clinics even after the end of a project.

Keywords : graduation, family planning, systems strengthening, sustainability

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