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Partner Spotlight: Robert Newman

Director

Aspen Management Partnership for Health



Q: What is AMP Health? What is your role?

A: AMP Health is a partnership whose mission is to improve health systems and outcomes by collaborating with governments to strengthen leadership and management capabilities through public-private partnership. In line with the Astana Declaration on Primary Health Care, we envision “a world where governments and societies prioritize, promote, and protect people’s health and well-being”. In addition to building leadership and management capacity, AMP Health works to share knowledge, generate evidence, and change the conversation about priorities for global development. Since late October, I have had the privilege of serving as the Director of AMP Health, working with a small team in Washington, DC and a group of tremendous individuals embedded in African Ministries of Health. In my first 5 months, we have focused on developing a new strategic plan (from which the mission and vision statements above are taken), reinvigorating our approach to building durable leadership and management skills, reinforcing our monitoring and evaluation approach, and maintaining strong relationships with our outstanding partners, especially the Ministries of Health with whom we work.

Q: How have you worked with USAID/CII?

A: We have been fortunate to partner with USAID/CII since the inception of AMP Health. Support from USAID/CII has allowed us to develop, refine, and expand the AMP Health model – drawing on the strengths of both private and public sectors. They have helped us in the design of our holistic approach to training entire teams in leadership and management, including the embedding of Management Partners – mid-career individuals with strong private sector experience – into Ministry of Health programs. From the outset, USAID/CII have been thought partners on this journey, recognizing that innovation in new tools needed to be matched by innovation in approaches to building human capacity and capital, and that leadership and management are central to the creation of robust and resilient health systems. The passion and commitment of the USAID/CII team is evident in all of our interactions with them. Their positive outlook, open and engaging style, and enthusiasm for the power of people to change the world makes them truly wonderful partners for AMP Health.

Q: What makes you passionate about your work?

A: We have made so much progress in global health and development, and yet we could do so much more to accelerate achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. For example, with the tools we have today, we could eliminate deaths from malaria. But doing so requires committed leadership and strong management. In my experience, people everywhere – including in Ministries of Health – are eager to become better leaders and managers. One of the exciting things about the AMP Health model is that we work closely with whole teams over several years. It is so rewarding to see not only individuals gain the skills that make them better at their jobs, but also entire teams become more effective and efficient. One of our key messages is that everyone is a leader and a manager in their work. It is exciting to watch people



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embrace that idea – and understand that those titles are not reserved for heads of teams and for supervisors. It is also wonderful to see people expand their vision of what is possible. At the last AMP Health Leadership Lab – a regular event at which we bring all of the AMP Health supported teams together for a week of learning and sharing – Doreen Ali, Deputy Director of Preventive Health Services in Malawi, summed it up beautifully: "It's about having a vision and the energy to execute on it – it's about dreaming in color, not in black and white. AMP Health and our Management Partner have seen where we were, where we are and where we are going. They are dreaming in color with us."

Q: What topic(s) in global health interest(s) you the most and why?

A: I have been very fortunate throughout my career to work on a variety of diseases across different institutions and geographies. I began my career working on child health and diarrheal diseases in South America, spent many years fighting malaria – mostly in Africa, and recently have been engaged with supporting efforts on HIV, TB, One Health, and Health Security, particularly in Asia. I remain deeply interested in all of these areas, and actively engaged in several of them, particularly malaria, One Health, and Health Security. Over the last decade, I have become increasingly convinced that while we were doing very well at investing in new tools – particularly diagnostics, drugs, vaccines, and data – we were not investing enough in the individuals and teams in charge of the programs responsible for ensuring that these tools reach everyone who needs them. I think that we have a tremendous opportunity to leverage the investments in health commodities by working in partnership with governments to build leadership and management capacity at all levels of the system. While my career has been focused on global health, and AMP Health currently works in the health sector, the opportunity to unlock development potential by investing in people exists across sectors. Addressing complex challenges, such as nutrition, could be facilitated and accelerated by working closely with Ministries of Agriculture, Education, and Health to build strong and collaborative leadership and management capacity.

Favorite Quote:

"The most dangerous leadership myth is that leaders are born – that there is a genetic factor to leadership. That's nonsense; in fact, the opposite is true. Leaders are made rather than born." – Warren Bennis