

Module: Leadership Training Workshop for Health Professionals
Organization: East Africa HEALTH Alliance
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Session 1: The Meaning of Leadership

What is Leadership?

There are many definitions of leadership

One definition developed by MSH's Management and Leadership Program:

Leadership is a set of practices, behaviors and values that enable work groups and organizations to face challenges and achieve results under complex conditions

Another source defines leadership as:

The ability of a person to influence the behavior of a group of people to follow a particular course of action so as to overcome challenges and achieve an extraordinary goal

Characteristics of Leadership

Leadership occurs in a team:

Leadership is always exercised in relationship with others, both inside and outside the organization or the workgroup that is being led.

Leadership is results oriented:

The true test of effective leadership is the visible progress towards the realization of a vision, whether small or large, and the achievement of results

Leadership Occurs at All Levels:

When people think of leaders they often think about highly placed public figures in governments or organizations

However, there are people at all levels in both the public and private sectors who are leading their teams, large or small

We call these people *"health professionals who lead."*

They are the ones who accept a challenge and are working with their organizations, programs, departments, or teams to face this challenge

In doing so are able to remove obstacles that stand in the way of achieving the vision and improving organizational results

Achieving results under challenging conditions

Leadership is about overcoming challenges

Health program managers in developing countries have described examples of the challenges, they face including:

- rapidly scaling-up services to reach more people;
- assuring delivery of high-quality services;
- developing the systems and capacity to absorb and use new funds;
- making their organizations more sustainable;
- moving from individuals focused on activities to teams focused on results
- decentralizing decision-making to managerial levels close to clients.

Facing challenges such as high maternal and infant mortality, poverty, poor quality services, insufficient human resources, or stressed health workers require people with leadership abilities.

Organizations need managers who can lead to provide guidance and inspiration to the teams that have to address those challenges.

Dimensions of leadership

Leadership has many dimensions

Leadership can be developed at all levels, whether people have formal power and authority or not

Authors write that:

- **Leadership involves not just "doing" but "being."** Effective leaders have a high level of self-awareness.

"Leadership involves continually clarifying and deepening our personal vision, focusing our energies and seeing reality objectively" (Senge 1994:7, 8)

- **Leadership is exercised with others.** Leaders get people to face the challenge, the change, and the learning.

"Solutions to adaptive challenges reside in the collective intelligence of employees at all levels." (Heifetz and Laurie 1997:33)

- **Leadership is responsibility.**

"Leadership is responsibility, not rank, title, privilege, or money... " (Drucker in Hesselbein et al. 1996:xii–xiii).

- **Leadership happens at all levels**

'You can start right where you are; it doesn't matter what your job is. You can contribute your new leadership, to your team" (Hesselbein 1997:83)

- **Leadership and management are both necessary.**

"Leadership and management are two distinctive, complementary systems of action, but both are necessary for success" (Kotter 1990:85).