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Kampf gegen Mangel- und Unterernährung: Schlüssel zur Gesundheit in Entwicklungsländern

Medicus Mundi International: Network Strategy 2011-2015

“We will make the MMI Network a real community of change for strengthening health systems”

Von Thomas Schwarz

Rooted in the history and in an analysis of the current environment of Medicus Mundi International (MMI), the “Network Strategy 2011-2015” provides a framework which explains how this international Network to which Medicus Mundi Switzerland belongs shall pursue its vision and carry out its operational mission during the coming five years.



When Medicus Mundi Switzerland took over, in 2008, the secretariat of Medicus Mundi International, the related agreement between the two parties defined “support for organisational development and strengthening of the MMI Network” as a main task for the new secretariat. As a first step, MMI sharpened its identity and profile as a NGO network, introducing and consequently using the name “Medicus Mundi International Network”, subscribing to “sharing knowhow and joining forces towards Health for All”.

However, and even with a “network policy” adopted in 2009 “Sharing knowhow and joining forces towards Health for All” is not only an inspiring slogan. It also indicates the change agenda of the international network and the particular role it wants to play. However, and even with the network policy adopted, the concept still needed to be translated into concrete programs and tools. The “Network Strategy 2011-2015” adopted by the MMI Assembly in May 2010 now provides guidance about how to do it, setting a coherent framework for the operational planning and the development of related programs and structures of the Network. The document contains four strategic directions for the coming five years:

1. We will focus joint ventures on issues related to health systems strengthening.
2. We will develop new spaces and tools for sharing know-how
3. We will focus joint international advocacy on the WHO.
4. We will develop new partnerships between NGOs and research institutions

Let me introduce them a bit more in detail.

“We will develop new spaces and tools for sharing know-how.” Coming together to share, to learn and to cooperate is the key element of any formal network and the core of the MMI Network Policy adopted in 2009. With the existing Network members - its key resource - and with its good links to partners outside the Network, MMI is well positioned to play the role of a living community. Since 2008, the Network has invested in the further development of tools for networking such as thematic working groups, an electronic platform (www.medicusmundi.org) with the profiles and contributions of the Network members and providing access to documents and thematic guides; a monthly electronic newsletter; ad hoc “network flashes” for urgent calls, and the use of “web2” platforms such as Twitter and Facebook.

The communities of change concept

The idea of the MMI Network as a living community strongly corresponds with the inspiring “communities of change” concept introduced to the MMI Network by its member Cordaid who states, in a key document: “We believe that development is essentially about change in human and in power relations. To meet the challenges we are faced with, new international relationships are needed. And we need to change the existing ones. The idea of creating Global Communities of Change puts the emphasis on cooperation rather on development, building alliances, joining forces in the pursuance of an overlapping change agenda. It is basically about people (citizens, individuals) and organisations (all types) working together in the pursuance of a social change agenda. It is about agenda sharing, true joint decision-making, and joint designing of goals and results.”

“We will focus joint ventures on issues related to health systems strengthening.” In addition to enhancing communication and cooperation between its members, the MMI Network aims at fostering the development of common policies and practices and at undertaking joint advocacy and sensitization. This is not possible without selecting joint key topics. The Network strategy defines “contributing to health system strengthening” as the common denominator of joint enterprises, without getting yet more concrete. Within this broad framework the development of a set of concrete programs will be demand driven, initiated and lead by network members, in an dialogue about shared key issues and developments and opportunities in the Network’s environment. A MMI workshop on health systems strengthening in November 2011 was a good starting point for this process.

Strengthening the WHO

“We will focus joint international advocacy on the WHO”. Joint advocacy of the MMI Network aims at influencing the international policy landscape in which their activities takes place. The Network intends play a role in passing its members key advocacy messages to the international level. On the other hand, the Network aims at encouraging and facilitating its members’ and their partners’ advocacy activities on a national level in the countries they are based or

engaged in. MMI is in official relations with the World Health Organization. The network will continue to participate and intervene in the World Health Assembly and other global and regional WHO (and WHO lead) structures, programs, events and consultations. At the same time, it wants to contribute to monitor the development of the World Health Organization and to strengthen the WHO as the international coordinating body for issues related to people's health, establishing coalitions and joint programs with other civil society organisations or networks pursuing the same tasks.

“We will develop new partnerships between NGOs and research institutions”. To accomplish their mission in the field of international health cooperation in a more rational – and finally more sustainable – way, the NGOs which are members and partners of the MMI Network are in dire need of reliable evidence on “what works and what does not”. On the other hand, research must be linked to the problems and issues non-governmental organisations and their partners are dealing with, to their need to find out ways to overcome technical and organisational constraints that impede local health care systems to deliver high coverage, equitable and quality health interventions, particularly at community and district level. The MMI research policy adopted in 2009 defines the Network's approach and mandate in a field which is not yet covered by other NGO networks and where MMI can strongly benefit from its traditionally good relations with a series of research institutions in order to become a leading actor.

Strategic planning means selecting, choosing one way among various valid options and then, for a specific period, following it, developing and vigorously pursuing programs that support the logic of the chosen strategy. So even if strategy development, by definition, is a creative act, our strategic choices for the next five years presented in the “MMI Network Strategy 2011-15” are based on a broad agreement of the members of the Medicus Mundi International Network that they are promising ones. Nevertheless, the success of the strategy will depend on the Network's institutions' and members' commitment to contribute actively to its implementation. Also Medicus Mundi Switzerland and its members are therefore “kindly invited” to get involved!

Institutional development is not a key element of the strategy. MMI considers institutional growth in terms of members, budget and capacities an indicator of the success of its work, and not as an objective itself. I am myself convinced that, by the end of 2015, the MMI Network will have extended its programs and activities in a way that a considerable number of new members have been attracted and that the Network's structures are strengthened.

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