Lesotho Recognized as a “Knowledge Providing Country” for Innovative Solutions in Healthcare by the World Bank’s South-South Experience Exchange Facility

Knowledge sharing among peers and partners in the development community is a key priority, as this practice can bring to light innovative solutions regarding some of the most difficult issues facing policymakers and practitioners. The World Bank’s South-South Knowledge Exchange (SSKE) provides a forum where important players from countries in the “Global South” can share experiences and “lessons learned” in country-led development solutions, providing both insight and know-how to meet specific challenges. Within the SSKE, the South-South Experience Exchange Facility finances global knowledge exchange projects and provide a platform for countries to share lessons.

The Lesotho National Referral Hospital Public-Private Partnership (PPP) project is a prime example of an innovative solution to help ease the burden on Lesotho’s health sector and improve access to quality, affordable health care services. This past year, the South-South Experience Exchange Facility recognized Lesotho and its recent completion of the Queen Mamohato Memorial Hospital as a “Knowledge Providing Country” for an activity titled, “Learning from the Lesotho Hospital Public-Private Partnership.” This project also recently won the Sustainable Development Network VPU Team Award for its strength in leveraging partnerships across the Bank.

In 2009, the Government of Lesotho (GoL) signed an 18-year PPP contract with Tsepong, a privately-owned consortium, to design, build, partially finance and operate a fully public health network consisting of the national referral hospital and three filter clinics in the greater Maseru area. The 425-bed Queen Mamohato Memorial Hospital and gateway clinic opened in October 2011, while the three refurbished and expanded filter clinics have been operating since May 2010. Between October 2011 and September 2012, hospital in-patient admissions surpassed 24,000 and outpatient visits exceeded 404,000. The World Bank Group assisted in the project’s conception, design and implementation by leveraging partnerships with a $6.25 million GPOBA grant for the first three years to help the GoL meet additional costs and finance access to basic services, IFC ongoing support for PPP management, and IDA support for project management. (GPOBA is currently anticipating the completion of an endline study to be delivered in May 2013, along with a Case Study and Multi-Media Package on Best Practices and Lessons Learned).

The GoL recognizes that its experience and the emerging lessons from this successful project may benefit other countries dealing with similar issues, such as Benin, Burkina Faso, Mauritius, Nigeria and Uganda. These countries have expressed interested in learning, through a facilitated exchange, about the potential of PPPs to contribute to the overarching goal of providing high quality, affordable health care services. More specifically, these countries would like to learn from the innovative Lesotho PPP/output-based aid (OBA) scheme and to become informed of its strengths as well as the pitfalls to be avoided. The proposed exchange therefore aims to: (i) improve the ability of policymakers to embark on PPPs/OBA schemes through exposure to a promising scheme, and access to experts and resource persons with in-depth knowledge of such approaches; and (ii) establish the seeds for a community of practitioners to share knowledge, experiences and lessons. Given the strong commitment in all the knowledge-sharing countries to partner with the private sector and the need for just-in-time information, there is a strong likelihood the expertise to be gained will be put to good use in adopting new models of service delivery.