Seppey, Mathieu: Institut de recherche en santé publique de l'Université de Montréal
math.seppey@gmail.com
Authors: Mathieu, Seppey, Université de Montréal
Valéry, Ridde, Institut de Recherche en Développement

Title: Determinants of sustainability: a case study of a RBF project in Burkina Faso

Many sub-Saharan countries are reforming their health system through results-based financing (RBF) programs, aiming for more and better services. Pilot projects are therefore implemented to set the basis of these reforms. Much resource is often put into such pilots, while too few concerns are given towards their sustainability (through the maintenance of its core elements or its institutionalisation at policy level).

In Burkina Faso, such a pilot was implemented in 15 health districts across 3 regions, involving more than 550 health centres (first or second line facilities). However, after more than 3 years of implementation, this pilot’s sustainability is still not guaranteed.

This study’s objective is to assess this project’s level of sustainability through sustainability’s determinants. For this objective, a case study was conducted. It involved in-depth interviews with a various actors (n=37): implementers, decision-makers, health practitioners or external experts from primary health care centres, district/regional hospitals or government agencies and directions.

Our study finds that the RBF project’s sustainability level was weak according to an unequal presence of sustainability’s determinants; activities are being maintained officially but not fully routinized. Discrepancies between the project’s values and those at the individual, organisational or governmental levels were noted to be an important barrier towards sustainability. Project’s ownership by key stakeholders also seemed superficial despite the implementers’ leadership and actions towards the project’s success. The project’s objective aiming for greater autonomy for health centres was also in direct confrontation with the Burkinabe’s hierarchical health system.

RBF’s motivational theory needs to be put back into the different contexts where it has been implemented. Many arguments about its inefficiency are already identified (primes are already due, they bring more work or are linked to the national development) and can undermined the project’s core mechanisms. A more contextualised “motivational cocktail” should be elaborated to facilitate the project’s sustainability.

These lessons should be applied in other contexts such as in sub-Saharan countries, maybe more specifically in West-African countries. Too many health interventions are implemented without taking sustainability into account. Sustainability goes further than financial aspects and must account for other determinants such as stakeholders’ ownership and motivation.