

HIGH LEVEL MINISTERIAL MEETING ON HEALTH RESEARCH IN AFRICA

8th - 10th March 2006

Abuja, Nigeria

COMMUNIQUE

High Level Ministerial Meeting on Health Research

Convened by the Federal Ministry of Health, Nigeria and the Ministry of Health, Ghana

With support from the World Health Organization (WHO) and
The Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR)

1. The WHO Ministerial Summit on Health Research in Mexico (2004), the 58th World Health Assembly endorsed a Plan of Action for Health Research to achieve the health Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the informal consultative meeting between Ministries of Health during the 55th Regional Committee in Maputo (2005) called for a renewed vision for and commitment to health research in Africa.
2. A High Level Ministerial Meeting on Health Research in Africa was held in Abuja, Nigeria from 8th -10th March 2006 to develop an African perspective on health research for achieving and sustaining health MDGs in the African continent. The findings of the meeting will be presented at the High Level Ministerial Meeting on Health Research in Developing Countries to be held in Accra, Ghana in June 2006.
3. There was a two-day technical consultation attended by 39 delegates from the following 11 African countries: Algeria, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa and Sudan. Also present were 15 representatives from development partners namely WHO, World Bank, UNICEF, COHRED, NEPAD, REPRONET-Africa. The delegates of the different countries made presentations on the current status of health research in their respective countries.
4. Transforming the vicious circle of poverty and ill-health to a virtuous circle of prosperity and improved health status in Africa requires a change of attitudes, starting with committed and dedicated leadership at all levels.
5. Discussions on background papers and country situation analyses focused on :
 - Weak health systems further undermined by poverty, lack of resources, conflicts and the burden of killer and debilitating diseases;

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- The importance of health research in providing tools for improving health and development by identifying problems, developing new and effective interventions, empowering individuals and communities, and informing policy and action in public health;
 - Strengths, weaknesses, challenges and needs of African health research systems with respect to qualified human resources, institutional strengthening, priority setting, national coordination mechanisms, funding, networking, developing partnerships, translation of research results into policy and action, shared responsibility for ethics in research, and the role of research in the attainment of internationally agreed health targets, especially health MDGs;
 - How health research should contribute to a better understanding of the nature of ill-health and public health problems and improve health care and service delivery;
 - How African governments should provide coordinated leadership and influence regional and global health research agendas.
6. We, the Ministers of Health and Heads of Delegations, identified the following key domains for health research in Africa:
- Infectious diseases, including malaria, tuberculosis, HIV, AIDS, emerging infections and neglected tropical diseases (e.g. African trypanosomiasis, Buruli ulcer, leishmaniasis, and lymphatic filariasis) that require improved prevention, diagnosis, treatment, control and surveillance;
 - Reproductive and sexual health;
 - Child health;
 - Non-communicable diseases, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancers, sickle cell disease, injuries etc.;
 - Malnutrition; and
 - Mental health including drug and substance abuse.
7. We, the Ministers of Health and Heads of Delegations, identified the following types of research to address these issues:
- Health systems research, including operational and implementation research;
 - Social sciences research including health economics, health policy research, medical anthropology and sociology and health communications research;
 - Biomedical and bioscience research for innovation and product development; and
 - Epidemiological research.

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8. We, the Ministers of Health and Heads of Delegations, reaffirm our commitment and recognize the need for Africa to take advantage of existing research institutions and the greater international commitment in achieving internationally agreed health targets especially health MDGs, agree:
- To accelerate efforts to develop and implement appropriate and relevant health research policies at national and regional levels;
 - To foster collaboration and leadership to promote essential national health research in Africa;
 - To strive to ensure the allocation of at least 2% of the national health budget and to further mobilize other resources from national and international sources for health research; and
 - To finalize the draft position paper on health research in the African region in consultation with other colleagues through further discussions and actions leading to the WHO Ministerial Conference for Health Research to be held in Africa in 2008.

Signed:

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria:

Mr Fodil HEBIB, First Secretary,
Embassy of Algeria in Nigeria

Republic of Cameroon:

Dr Pierre ONGOLO-ZOGO, Director,
Division of Health Operations Research, Ministry of Public Health

Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia:

Mr Adugna Woyessa GEMEDA, Researcher,
Ethiopian Health and Nutrition Research Institute

Republic of Ghana:

Hon. Major Courage E. K. QUASHIGAH (rtd),
Minister of Health

Republic of Kenya :

Hon. Dr. Wilfred G. MACHAGE, MP
Deputy Minister for Health

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Republic of Malawi:

Hon. Charles T. MCHACHA, MP
Deputy Minister of Health

Republic of Mozambique:

Dr Francisco Siedade MBOFANA,
Senior Health Researcher, Ministry of Health

Federal Republic of Nigeria:

Professor Eyitayo LAMBO,
Federal Minister of Health

Republic of Senegal:

Dr Abdoulaye LY,
Technical Adviser to the Minister of Health and Medical Prevention

Republic of South Africa:

Professor Ronald W. GREEN-THOMPSON,
Special Adviser to the Minister of Health, Ministry of Health

Republic of the Sudan:

Dr Taha Ahmed ALMOKASHFI,
Research Directorate, Federal Ministry of Health

Abuja, Nigeria, 10th March 2006