

Establishment of the National Human Resources for Health Observatory (NHRHO) in Sudan: First Stakeholders Meeting

Center for Professional Development Hall, Khartoum, Sudan, 25 June 2007

Federal Ministry of Health in collaboration with WHO

The importance of human resources for health (HRH) for the functioning of health systems is now widely recognized. Health workers usually spearhead the production of health through better utilization of other system inputs.

It has recently been shown that the number and quality of health workers in each country are critical to improving health interventions and achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – see the world Health Report, 2006 by the WHO.

Despite the centrality of HRH, this valuable resource has witnessed a sort of neglect and under-focus during the past years at the global, regional and national levels. However, health workforce issues are increasingly re-emphasized recently. Several global and regional initiatives were introduced in response to the critical shortage of health personnel in developing countries, in particular the Sub-Saharan Africa.

One domain of HRH has received a special focus – that is the area of health work-force data and information. This concern has been translated in a movement to establish HRH observatories at the regional and national levels. The first to appear was the regional observatory on HRH in the Latin America and Caribbean Region followed by efforts to establish regional and national observatories in the WHO African and Eastern Mediterranean regions.

The observatories were envisioned to work on a multi-stakeholder basis to continuously provide the

HRH data and information needed to inform health policy and decision – making.

Sudan, as one of the country members of WHO/EMRO, has taken the initiative to establish a national HRH observatory. Several efforts have been exerted in this direction including offices establishment, conducting an HRH census and preparing the proposal for the functioning of the observatory.

The first stakeholder meeting was held in Khartoum, CPD centre on Monday 25 June 2007 under the auspices of H.E. Dr. Tabita Butros, the Federal Minister of Health.

Over 25 participants have attended the meeting representing the following stakeholders:

1. Federal Ministry of Health;
2. Ministry of Labor (Civil Service Chamber and the National Council for Training);
3. Sudan Medical Council;
4. Council for Allied Health professions;
5. The Medical Corps;
6. Police Health Service;
7. National Health Insurance Fund;
8. Sudan Doctors' Union;
9. Health and Social Professions Trade Union;
10. Laboratory Technicians Association;
11. Radiology Technicians Association;
12. Secretariat for Sudanese Working Abroad;
13. World Health Organization; and
14. Senior specialist doctors.

In her opening remarks, the Federal Minister of Health has expressed the government commitment to support the observatory. The undersecretary of

the FMOH has also stated the readiness of the ministry to host the observatory and support its functioning as a platform for consensus and a source of evidence for HRH policy and planning in the country.

Three discussion papers were presented by Dr. Walid, Abubakr, WHO expert; Dr. Ismail Bushara, Director of Human Resource Department, FMOH and Dr. Elsheikh Badr, the National Focal Point for the observatory.

The presentations were focused on the concept and experiences of HRH Observatories, the initiative took by Sudan and the practical steps for the full operation of the observatory in the country.

The presentations were followed by a thorough discussion in which all participants has contributed. At the end, the meeting has proposed the following recommendations:

1. The need for the establishment of the national HRH observatory (NHRHO) is well recognized and efforts should be exerted to fully establish it as soon as possible.
2. Involvement of all stakeholders is fundamental. However, each stakeholder institution is to actively contribute to the observatory in its own capacity and domain.
3. The state and locality levels should be made aware of the observatory and the state ministries of health should be fully involved in the establishment and functioning of the observatory.
4. The NHRHO is to be established within the FMOH. However, a reasonable degree of autonomy is to be guaranteed to enable the observatory to effectively operate – it is suggested that the NHRHO to be affiliated to the Minister or the Undersecretary.
5. The observatory board should be formed with representation for stakeholder institutions and

an executive secretariat should also be urgently formed to pursuit implementation issues

6. Political commitment is to be secured, in particular at the level of states.
7. Other stakeholders who could not attend the meeting should be contacted and made aware about the observatory. A second meeting with comprehensive participation involving both public and private sector relevant agencies should be organized.
8. There should be an intensive advocacy for the NHRHO. This includes benefiting from media to reach public and private institutions as well as community.
9. Training and introduction of information technology should be emphasized to support the functioning and sustainability of the main observatory and its branches.

Participants have repeatedly expressed their concern to see practical steps to keep this vital initiative up, re- iterating their commitment to actively participate in the NHRHO for the betterment of health service in the country.