



Promotion of horizontal technical cooperation in health sector reform in developing countries

Report by the Secretariat

1. In its resolution WHA51.16, on the promotion of horizontal technical cooperation in health sector reform in developing countries, the Fifty-first World Health Assembly (May 1998) highlighted the links between poverty and ill-health. The Director-General was requested to support Member States in meeting the health needs of their poorest people and to strengthen the capacity of ministries of health to play a key role in intersectoral efforts to eradicate poverty. The Director-General was also asked to ensure wide consultation with countries of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and other developing countries.
2. The Non-Aligned Movement convened its 23rd meeting of Ministers of Health in Havana, Cuba, in June 1998. In September 1998, the summit of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Countries was held in Durban, South Africa. The reports of these two meetings, each presented to the Director-General by a delegation from the Non-Aligned Movement, identified four major areas of joint activities with WHO: social values as a basis for policy formulation; globalization and health for all; health sector reform; and the revised drug strategy.
3. In that connection, special reference should be made to the discussions held at the 103rd session of the Executive Board in January 1999 on WHO's revised drug strategy. During those discussions, the Board adopted resolution EB103.R1 recommending a draft resolution for adoption by the Fifty-second World Health Assembly. The Board also discussed a number of issues not directly reflected in the resolution, but of particular interest to health sector development in developing countries.
4. In the context of the ongoing reform at WHO, health is recognized as a critical component of the global development agenda, and account has been taken of the need for greater awareness and sensitivity on the part of WHO to the role of actors in health and development. In this perspective, and in order to ensure that health is brought into the mainstream of action for sustainable development and the eradication of poverty, related departments have been restructured within the cluster on Sustainable development and healthy environments.
5. With respect to the health sector, the recognition that WHO should have an enhanced role in this area was one of the factors leading to the establishment of a Cabinet project entitled Partnerships for Health Sector Development. The aim of the project is to enable WHO as a whole to take a more comprehensive view of the development and reform of the health sector, and to ensure that each cluster at headquarters and each level of the Organization can make a more effective contribution to the achievement of better health at the country level and to the international debate.

6. The role of the project is to work within the Organization, reviewing past experience, analysing options for change, and bringing together ideas and experience from different programmes and offices. The focus of the project is three-fold: to explore how the various programmes within WHO can contribute to strengthening the health sector while at the same time achieving an impact on major causes of ill-health; to seek to develop a more strategic approach to WHO's work in and with countries; and to find ways of building strategic alliances that will help to influence the thinking and spending of other agencies influential in the health sector.

ACTION BY THE HEALTH ASSEMBLY

7. The Health Assembly is invited to note the report.

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