



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

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Public-private partnerships for health

Report by the Director-General

1. One of the main roles of WHO is to harness and coordinate support from among a variety of players to meet the health development agenda.
2. Innovative new policies and initiatives have been developed for collaboration with the public and private sectors, including foundations, and for alliances between the public and private sectors, in order to implement programmes geared to WHO priorities and to public health in general.

FOUNDATIONS

3. The strong economy in wealthy countries has led to a major surge in the value of endowments, most notably in the United States of America. The health sector and biomedical research have received a significant share of such funding. Increasing numbers of foundations are prepared to look beyond the domestic context to the needs of global health.
4. WHO has always maintained close collaboration with foundations active in the health sector, such as with the Nippon Foundation (leprosy), Rotary International (poliomyelitis), Eli Lilly (mental health), Lions Clubs International (blindness) and the Rockefeller Foundation (vaccines, tropical disease research, and other). Increased analysis of, and contacts with, other foundations in 1999 resulted in commitments from, for example, the David and Lucille Packard Foundation (reproductive health) and the Hewlett Foundation (human reproduction).
5. The major development for WHO has resulted from the establishment of the United Nations Foundation, Inc. in early 1998 and the vast endowment of US\$ 17 thousand million made by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The United Nations Foundation committed US\$ 100 million annually over 10 years to organizations of the United Nations system in the fields of children's health, population and women, and the environment. WHO has received multiyear pledges of some US\$ 49 million since September 1998, particularly for tobacco control, eradication of poliomyelitis, immunization, and children's health, representing roughly one-third of total grants from the Foundation. Consultations with the Gates Foundation are currently under way, and WHO has already received two pledges of over US\$ 10 million each for the programmes on human reproduction and children's vaccines. The Global Alliance on Vaccines and Immunization (see paragraph 17) will also benefit from a very substantial donation.
6. Significantly, both these two foundations have made partnerships and collaboration with the private sector a key feature of their grant giving. The United Nations Foundation operates in the

context of, for example, joint WHO/UNICEF projects, United Nations country team action, and cosponsorship of grants by the private sector; the Gates Foundation, in the context of cosponsorship and joint action on, for example, eradication of poliomyelitis, trachoma control, and cervical cancer.

REACHING OUT TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR

7. WHO is conscious of the potential of collaboration with the private sector at global, regional and country levels. The private sector has strong advantages that enable WHO to reach wider and to have a more significant impact on global public health.

8. Thus far formal or informal partnerships have been established around drug and vaccine donations, donations in kind, *pro-bono* services, advocacy and communications, and financial support.

9. Substantial in-kind drug donations in support of public health action are being made by Merck, through the United States National Committee for UNICEF, to the Onchocerciasis Control Programme in West Africa; by SmithKline Beecham PLC, for the elimination of lymphatic filariasis; by Glaxo Wellcome PLC, for malaria control; by the Novartis group, for leprosy control; and by Pasteur Mérieux Connaught, to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative.

10. The Global Polio Eradication Initiative is an outstanding example of successful public-private sector collaboration between organizations of the United Nations system, Member States, foundations, nongovernmental organizations and the private sector. Rotary International, in particular, has contributed millions of volunteer work-hours, donations in-kind and advocacy efforts, along with financial support exceeding US\$ 325 million, to the eradication of poliomyelitis. The recent commitment of De Beers to eradication of poliomyelitis has so far resulted in not only significant financial support but also advocacy activities ranging from its Chairman's calls to other business leaders, through active community engagement, to global media coverage.

11. Given the imperative need to ensure that donations from the private sector are suitable, avoid conflicts of interest and provide clear health benefits, WHO revised its Guidelines on interaction with commercial enterprises in July 1999 for implementation on a trial basis. Consultations on these guidelines with governments and the private sector are being pursued.

MOBILIZING NEW ACTORS ON THE INTERNATIONAL HEALTH STAGE

12. Joining forces with a variety of private sector partners from industries that have not traditionally worked with WHO can clearly enable WHO to have a broader and deeper impact on global public health. In 1999 two new alliances were forged in the private sector that offer a new model for successful partnership with industry, outside the pharmaceutical sector.

13. One of these new ventures is WHO's cooperation agreement with the World Alliance for Community Health, a not-for-profit organization set up by five international mining companies. As part of this cooperation, WHO lends its technical expertise to evaluate and monitor community health projects and thus provides a framework within which the Alliance's member companies can promote long-term health gains in the local communities in which they operate.

14. In addition, WHO has worked with the Association of Oil and Gas Producers to help establish strategic health management principles and guidelines for the oil and gas industry. These guidelines

outline steps that international oil and gas companies can follow to ensure systematic, cooperative planning with local authorities for primary health care projects that should lead to a more healthy workforce and promote lasting improvements in the health of their host community in general.

15. Round tables with the pharmaceutical industry are focusing on improving individual and public health through collaboration in the areas of research and development for neglected infectious diseases, better access to essential drugs, and the fight against substandard and counterfeit drugs. Extension of the round-table concept to other sectors active in the health field, such as the food industry, is under review.

ENGAGING IN ALLIANCES

16. WHO has welcomed opportunities to join forces with a range of other organizations of the United Nations system, governments, nongovernmental organizations and the private sector.

17. WHO has most recently taken a lead role in the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization, which aims at saving children's lives and protecting people's health through the widespread use of safe vaccines. The Alliance has attracted support from a wide array of public and private partners.

18. Other examples of alliances with public and private partners are the Medicines for Malaria Venture, launched as a partnership with the pharmaceutical industry to discover new tools to combat malaria; the Global Programme to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis, which focuses on mobilizing partners from all sectors of society; Vision 2020, which works towards eliminating the major causes of blindness; and the Global Vitamin A Alliance, which works with industry on food fortification and provision of vitamin A capsules to combat deficiency in the developing countries.

19. Plans are under way to launch in June 2000 a global alliance for health promotion, bringing together representatives of the public sector, the private sector, and civil society (the Prince of Wales's Business Leaders Forum, the International Union for Health Promotion and Education, the World Travel and Tourism Council, and others) in order to foster the concept of "health-promoting companies".

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