

FOR DEBATE

Health Systems Action Network (HSAN): *Supporting Countries to Achieve or Exceed the Health MDGs by 2015*

Building upon discussions held at the WHO sponsored Montreux Challenge meeting (4-5 April 2005) we would like to invite partners to further develop the idea of a 'health systems action network' (HSAN). As part of a wider consultation, a meeting will be held during the 2005 Global Health Council Conference to consult about the need for and possible role for HSAN, given other international developments. Potential partners from developing country governments, bilateral and multilateral agencies, civil society organizations and other non-state actors are all welcome. First thoughts on the potential goals, scope and role of such a network are set out below, to stimulate this debate.

HSAN's goal would be to support interested countries to achieve or exceed the health MDGs by 2015, by catalyzing an acceleration of more coordinated action by key partners to assist in the creation of expanded, comprehensive, & high-impact health systems strengthening activities during 2006-2015.

Our vision is that health systems strengthening ensures (i) a basic package of sustainable, quality health services, available and accessible to all, without financial barriers, and (ii) information and rights for every citizen to protect their own health. Specifically we will advocate and take action for:

- **Finance** – minimal financial barriers to accessing essential health services;
- **Health workers** – sufficient, trained and motivated health workers of local origins, located where they are most needed;
- **Stewardship** – a government empowered and able to protect the health of its citizens and ensure their safety when seeking care;
- **Drugs** – access for all to safe, appropriate, affordable, essential drugs when needed;
- **Generation, exchange and use of knowledge**– that allows all stakeholders in the health system to be as informed and as effective as possible; this includes the development of functioning health information systems that empower citizens, civil society organizations, health workers at all levels and policy makers to chart progress against these and other health goals.

We are convinced that the Millennium Development Goals and the goals of UNGASS, 3 by 5 and the Presidential Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief cannot be achieved without the foundations of strong health systems. To achieve this, partners could, depending on their expertise, contribute to one or more of the following possible functions:-

- **Informed advocacy:** engaging with local, national and global actors to call for greater focus on the need for health systems strengthening and specific policy changes to support health systems strengthening;
- **Innovations:** contributing to the generation and exchange of ideas, experience and evidence on building stronger health systems, through helping to develop more effective policies and strategies; defining best practice norms and standards for health

system elements, priority health system strengthening investments, and benchmarks against which to hold stakeholders accountable;

- **Action:** fostering more concerted responses to requests for assistance from countries and programmes; facilitating links to partners able to provide assistance.
- **Tracking** – supporting efforts to build national capacity to plan and monitor progress in health systems strengthening.

The network is envisaged as a 'canopy' or 'big tent' of partners that will complement and reinforce existing health system strengthening efforts, and fosters linkages between them. To find out more, please participate in the consultative meeting to be held at 7pm, Tuesday May 31st, in the Palladian Room, during the Global Health Council conference. [If you are unable to participate but wish to be kept informed please contact: Sara Bennett (sara_bennett@abtassoc.com) or Phyllida Travis (travisp@who.int)].