



Side Event Draft Concept Note

Title: THE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE IN AFRICA: BETTER HEALTH FOR AFRICA

Sponsor/Co-Sponsor: UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, UNAIDS, IOM, UNHCR, UN-HABITAT, INTRACEN, UN, ECA, OSAA, AU

Date: 22 September 2008

Time: 10:00 am – 1:00 pm

Venue: Conference Room 8

Potential Moderator/Chair, Panelists/Resource persons [this information can be provided as it becomes available]

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Context

African Governments, with support from development partners (including donors), have developed policies and programmes for social and economic development in Africa. While many of the policies and programmes have been implemented with good results and impact, many have also ended only at policy level or with limited implementation. Despite these initiatives and interventions, which are still not enough, it is projected that Africa as a whole is off track to meeting the MDGs on reducing child mortality, improving maternal health and combating infectious disease (MDGs 4, 5 and 6). Yet, experiences from other continents, as well as recent progress in several countries in the region, prove that the Goals can be achieved across Africa. Nevertheless, support for rapid scale-up of proven interventions as well as critically needed investments in basic healthcare systems remains insufficient. In most African countries the basic health infrastructure, human resources, equipment and supplies are inadequate to provide essential maternal, child and other reproductive health services, and to control and treat infectious diseases, such as Tuberculosis, Malaria and HIV and AIDS. Malaria, HIV and AIDS and other diseases that can be controlled and treated continue to take millions of lives throughout Africa and are spreading to more parts of the continent.

At the midpoint of the Millennium Development Goals, despite progress made, significant challenges still remain. There is urgent need for African governments and their development partners to renew commitment to these goals by reinvigorating efforts and by strengthening

partnerships for mutual responsibility and accountability for the implementation of all commitments for social development in Africa.

In view of the multi-sectoral nature of the vital elements for socio-economic development, and the fact that sustainable social development requires a healthy population, especially the workforce essential for economic growth, this panel session will focus on the need for better health for Africa.

Recognizing that African countries are not likely to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) without significant improvements in the sexual and reproductive health of the people of Africa which is crucial in addressing MDG 1 on poverty reduction, the 2nd Ordinary Session of the Conference of African Ministers of Health, meeting in Gaborone, Botswana, in October 2005, adopted the Continental Policy Framework on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights which was endorsed by AU Heads of State in January 2006. In September 2006, the Health Ministers have also taken further steps to implementation by developing and adopting the costed comprehensive Maputo Plan of Action for the operationalization of the Continental Policy Framework on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (2007-2010). The African Governments renewed their political commitment to health through the adoption of the Africa Health Strategy 2007–2015 of the African Union, which also emphasized the need to ensure conducive environments for health development such as improved peace, security, economic growth in some countries and the increasing involvement of regional economic communities in health.

Recently, in 2008, many declarations and commitments, and outcomes of regional and international gatherings, have reiterated the need to intensify efforts in addressing the Social Development challenges in Africa, especially ensuring Better Health for All. These declarations include: the Ouagadougou declaration on Primary Health Care and Health Systems in Africa – Achieving Better Health for Africa in the New Millennium (30 April); the World Health Assembly (May 14-25, Geneva), the Tokyo International Conference on African Development or TICAD IV (May 28-30, Yokohama), the OECD Ministerial on “The Future of the Internet Economy” (June 17-18, Seoul), the G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit (July 7-9). In June 2008, at the High Level Meeting on HIV, Member states reaffirmed the commitments made in 2001, 2006 and in 2007 to work towards achieving universal access to HIV prevention and AIDS treatment and the provision of comprehensive care and support.

Many forthcoming international gatherings also offer unique opportunities for all stakeholders to reach consensus on the challenges and the scale-up tested and effective interventions to reach everyone, including the marginalized and difficult reach people. Such opportunities include: the OECD Ministerial on “Aid Effectiveness” (September 2-4, Accra), and this special High Level Events on “African Development Needs” (September 22, New York) and the “Millennium Development Goals” (September 25, New York) at the UN General Assembly. Governments, UN System and other development partners including, foundations, business, international organizations and civil society should take advantage of these opportunities to renew their commitments for a coherent and coordinated response to reach the MDGs, especially the health related MDGs in Africa.

The strong interrelationship among health determinants and social development such as economic development, governance, education, gender and culture, food security and nutrition, environment, peace, and security underscores the need to address health determinants as inroad to social and economic development in Africa, especially in resource-poor settings where health

inequalities and limited access to health care are more critical. In tackling this agenda, it is important to take a multi-faceted approach, promoting synergies among MDG-related development sectors particularly among health (especially reproductive health, prevention of HIV infections and the treatment and care for AIDS, TB and Malaria), law enforcement and criminal justice, water and education, in a framework of sustainable development, community involvement, promoting human rights, gender equality and women empowerment and good governance based on transparency and rule of law, and broad-based private sector-led growth.

The AIDS epidemic poses a serious challenge to sustained development in Africa. Therefore, it should be recognized that moving towards universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010 is an important milestone to the achievement of Health MDGs by 2015. The recent progress in the AIDS response in Africa, notably in the access to antiretroviral treatment and services to prevent mother to child transmission of HIV, by a number of countries, is encouraging. It is a matter of concern, however, that Africa still remains most heavily affected by the epidemic, accounting for the largest share of people with HIV and AIDS-related deaths globally and universal access to HIV prevention services is far off. Another matter of concern is the increasing drug use, particularly injecting drug use, in many countries of sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa.

Considering the number of countries in conflict or post conflict recovery and development in Africa, efforts to address social development deserve special attention to meet the needs of people in fragile and post-conflict states because they remain farthest from reaching the MDGs. This requires comprehensive, integrated and sustained international assistance, including peacekeeping and peace building efforts where necessary, tailored to the particular context.

Ensuring adequate water supplies for human, industrial and environmental needs are critical to protecting human health, promoting sustainable economic growth, and ensuring peace and security. Many of the communicable and parasitic health conditions are water-borne and come from poor sanitation. A balanced social development plan in Africa needs access to drinkable water and good sanitation.

Main issues and challenges

1. Need to ensure community involvement in all health and social development to ensure community-responsiveness, acceptability, utilization and sustainability.
2. Need to ensure universal access to HIV prevention, AIDS treatment and care, stabilization of tuberculosis incidence; increased coverage of innovative tools such as insecticide-treated nets against malaria.
3. Need for coordinated and complementary support from development partners to address global health priorities and deliver on existing health commitments in Africa.
4. Need for increased funding of health development from domestic and donor support, especially the need to African Governments to meet the 15% commitment made at the Abuja declaration on Health.
5. Need to increase investment for comprehensive strengthening of health systems including social health protection; the improvement of Sexual and Reproductive Health including Family Planning, and Maternal, Newborn and Child Health; the scaling-up of programs to counter infectious diseases and increase access to essential medicines, through Primary Health Care and referral health services.
6. Need to ensure reliable health workforce to achieve quantitative and qualitative improvement in quality of care, through training of sufficient number of health workers, including

community health workers and to assure an enabling environment for their effective retention in developing countries.

7. Need to review and adopt effective policies and scale up evidence-based programs to address the needs of the most at risk and marginalized populations, including health issues of refugees and IDPs.
8. Need to ensure access to drinkable water and good sanitation

Possible Questions to guide an interactive discussion

1. How do Governments and development partners ensure the involvement, participation and empowerment of communities for their well-being and sustainability of health and social development?
2. How can African Governments and development partners accelerate the implementation of primary health care for the improvement of health care and social development?
3. In view that the current level of response to HIV does not curtail the spread, or mitigate enough the impact of the epidemic, how can African Governments and development partners ensure universal access to a continuum of prevention, treatment and care for AIDS TB and Malaria?
4. How can Governments and development partners ensure sustained and predictable access to resources (including financing) for and health and social development?
5. How can African Governments accelerate the implementation of the Maputo Plan of Action to prevent the unacceptably high maternal mortality and improve Maternal, Newborn and Child Health in Africa?

Expected Results

[To be finalized]