

Concept Paper

High Level Meeting on Health Research by Ministers from Africa and selected Advanced Developing Countries in Accra, Ghana in June 2006

Preceded by

High Level Meeting on Health Research by African Ministers in Abuja, March 2006

Meetings to run in concert with UNICEF / UNDP / World Bank / WHO Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases

Introduction

Recent discussion on international development focusing on Africa, including: documentation and literature being generated through the AU and NEPAD; the Millennium Development Goals Commission; and most recently the G8 meeting in Gleneagles make it increasingly clear that:

- improving public health, particularly in the area of neglected infectious diseases
- the development of an appropriate scientific and technology 'innovation' base, are essential prerequisites for human development and progress in Africa.

Increased country engagement and investment in innovative and appropriately directed health research is an essential component of both these challenges. At the moment disease endemic countries are missing out on many of the opportunities created by recent advances in health sciences and related technologies. Concerted and coordinated efforts among the countries concerned, and sustained interactions with international agencies and research organizations, will be necessary to facilitate enhanced activity in this area.

The timing is now right for African countries most affected by diseases of poverty, and other developing countries, to assert a greater interest in the international health research agenda as it applies to their development and, through both national and international investment, to increase their stakeholderhip in shaping and undertaking research in this area.

It is therefore proposed to hold a high level meeting in Accra in June 2006 to establish a framework that could be used to enhance the involvement of disease endemic countries (DEC) in efforts to facilitate and promote roles of health research in control of diseases endemic in resource poor settings. The development and foundation for such a framework would occur through a preceding high level meeting in Abuja in March, which would to focus on the needs of African countries.

The meetings could feed into the 2nd Global Summit on Health Research planned for 2008 in Africa.

It would be beneficial if the Accra meeting could be timed to coincide with a meeting of the Joint Coordinating Board of the UNICEF / UNDP / World Bank / WHO Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases and to feed into its 10 year vision and strategy. The two meetings could thus reinforce each other and have a significant influence on research in infectious diseases leading up to the 2015 timeline of the Millennium Development Goals.

Accra Meeting

Time: proposed June 16-17th, 2005

Participation

It is anticipated that 15 - 18 Honourable Ministers from Disease Endemic Countries of Africa(10), Asia(3) and Latin America(5) will participate in the meeting. Participating countries will be selected based on the following criteria:

1. Political leadership in effort to control neglected diseases.
2. Ongoing disease control activities in the countries.
3. Role of research in providing evidence for policy
4. Evidence of promoting 'innovative' research and technology development

Objectives of the Meeting

(this will follow substantive discussions and conclusions developed in Abuja)

- Exchange experiences and strategies for control of diseases, perspectives on research, research impact on policy and the role of research and technology in development, including public private sector interactions.
- Highlight the significance and importance of health research and associated cooperation for developing countries as a means to achieving the health related millennium development goals and highlight the role of research within the health system
- Define key areas of research required: (i) internationally; (ii) regionally; (iii) nationally with an emphasis on diseases of poverty.
- Define research capacity building needs of developing countries and approaches to realising those capacities
- Define approaches for developing countries to individually and collectively contribute to, and influence, enhanced research for health and human development through coordinated action with international organisations and others.
- Definition of a process through which developing countries can better and more strongly engage in and contribute to international health research and scientific innovation, with a focus on neglected infectious diseases

Expected Outputs

- A meeting report highlighting role of research in achievement of millennium development goals for health and demonstrating the commitment and ability of developing countries to invest in, develop and create a strong stakeholdership in international health research, with a strong focus on issues facing Africa.
- A framework for enhanced partnership and the utilisation of research to enhance control of diseases in developing countries

Abuja Meeting

Time: Early March, 2006

Participation

This meeting will be restricted to the African country participants of the Accra meeting.

Objectives of Meeting

The meeting will encompass a detailed technical discussion of health research issues and will lay the foundation for the Accra meeting. As such it will focus on the detail of the discussion and framework envisaged in Accra from an African perspective. This could include:

- Exchange experiences and strategies for control of diseases, perspectives on research, research impact on policy and the role of research and technology in development, including public private sector interactions.
- Identifying unique needs and aspects of diseases in Africa, for example the neglected infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS and TB, Malaria, and African sleeping sickness.
- Strategies to enhance human, institutional and technology development and its links to the development of higher education on the continent
- How best to link research into policy and action
- Identifying modalities for greater African participation and contribution to the generation of innovation to meet unique needs of Africa, including interactions with the private sector
- How best to promote collaboration: (i) within Africa; (ii) through South-South networks in general; (iii) through North-South networks
- The role and utility of international organizations such as WHO and TDR in contributing to research and capacity building efforts.
- Strategies for accessing and creating internal and external resources for research

Expected Outputs

- An overview of African health research needs with a focus on neglected infectious diseases
- Key elements of a framework for enhanced partnership and the utilisation of research to take forward to the Accra meeting with an emphasis on enhancing control of diseases in Africa