Conference of Ministers of Finance and Health
Session 1: Value for Money, Accountability and Sustainability: Towards and Beyond the Health MDGs

Date: 04 July 2012
Time: 9:30-10:40
Venue: Tunis, Tunisia

SESSION AIM

The speaker will provide an overview of the global evidence on high impact interventions and innovative approaches that can increase access and coverage, improve health outcomes for poor and disadvantaged populations and enhance economic growth and development.

BACKGROUND

Many low and middle income countries around the world have in the last decade made ambitious commitments to universal health coverage, or to improve existing health coverage programs. What are the programmatic and policy interventions which have been successfully pursued? What is the relevance for Africa?

Africa is experiencing fast economic growth and the last few years have seen an acceleration of progress in many countries towards achieving the health MDGs. At the same time, the continent continues to experience a high burden of disease. With 12% of the world's population, Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for 49% of maternal deaths, 50% of under-five infant deaths and 67% of HIV/AIDS cases. Rising income inequality and social exclusion means that economic growth has not necessarily resulted in increased access to health care by poor and disadvantaged populations. Reducing the burden of disease will contribute to inclusive and accelerated growth, thus improving opportunities for poor and disadvantaged populations. These problems are by no means unique to Africa and over the past decades, many low and middle income countries outside Africa, including Indonesia, Mexico, Thailand, China, Vietnam and Cambodia have introduced financing and health service reforms which improve access and equity, quality and outcomes.

In 2010, the partners of the Harmonizing Health for Africa (HHA) Initiative published Investing in Health for Africa, The Case for Strengthening Systems for Better Health Outcomes. The HHA paper argues for careful and systematic investments in African health systems, taking into account factors such as demographic trends, the burden of disease and the financing of health systems to ensure that investments are deployed where they are most needed and will return the most value for money in terms of health outcomes. New and existing resources should be invested in the public and private sectors so that both can serve as platforms for sustainable health improvements.
Throughout the continent, there is now evidence of innovative, high impact approaches to solving these problems. More money is needed for health, but these new approaches will also ensure more health for the money. The use of data to illustrate the relationship between investments and health outcomes will be demonstrated using inter-country comparisons.

The keynote address will emphasize the key role of evidence to drive health reform and will provide an overview of some of the key reforms which have been successfully introduced around the world. These include Mexico’s Seguro Popular a national health insurance program which enabled Mexico to recently achieve universal health care, evidence-based planning and the use of scorecards to ensure accountability.

KEY DISCUSSION TOPICS

- As African countries start to implement these reforms, what are the lessons of global experience in implementation for Africa?
- What are the enabling conditions for success? What is the role of leadership in government and civil society?
- How to better share best practices and for Africa to have a stronger voice in the global health financing debate?
- How can African achieve more diversified and sustainable financing models, including innovative financing mechanisms, domestic resource mobilization and engagement of the private sector?
- What are the opportunities to reduce costs and increase service coverage, including optimal resource allocation, efficient programming, pooled procurement of drugs, etc.? 

CHAIRS & SPEAKERS

Chair: Hon. Houcine Dimassi, Minister of Finance, Tunisia
Co-Chair: Hon. Soumana Sanda, Minister of Health, Niger

Dr. Agnes Soucat, Director, Human Development Department, AfDB, on behalf of HHA (15 min)

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Julio Frenk, Dean, Harvard School of Public Health and former Minister of Health of Mexico (25min)

Dr. Hans Rosling, Founder, Gapminder Foundation (15 min)

Open discussion 20 min