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REGIONAL CONTRIBUTION TO GLOBAL MINISTERIAL FORUM ON RESEARCH FOR HEALTH

PAHO/WHO Preparatory Dialogues for the 2008 Global Ministerial Forum on Research for Health

Background

1. According to the findings of a 2002 evaluation in the Americas, essential research for the development and application of innovative solutions in health is among the least developed of the 11 Essential Public Health Functions.
2. The indicators that assessed capacities to plan public health research received low scores in most countries. (1)
3. Research is crucial for development, and for the improvement of equity and public health. Functional national health research systems are needed to enable countries to develop and improve public health, to address the gap between what is known and what is done, and to deliver innovative solutions that improve health and equity. (2)(3) This is particularly relevant in low resource scenarios where every expenditure is important and resources cannot be wasted on ineffective or unsafe practices.
4. The Mexico Statement on Health Research and knowledge geared to improve health: strengthening health systems, issued during the Ministerial Summit on Research for Health in Mexico City in 2004, listed strategies and actions needed to bolster national health research systems that encompass country needs through the production and use of scientific research that informs decisions for health.(4)
5. The 58th World Health Assembly acknowledged the Mexico Statement and issued Resolution 58.34 urging interested parties to act. WHO has coordinated the

response with its Global and Regional Advisory Committees on Health Research and its Regional Offices, including technical cooperation for the subjects mentioned in the Resolution.(5)

Progress Since 2004

6. PAHO/WHO has coordinated the response to Resolution 58.34 in the Americas and aligned its technical cooperation and expected results with WHO, as reflected in PAHO's Strategic Plan 2008-2012.(6)

7. Ministers of Health and other interested parties have made a commitment to strengthen national health research systems and develop strategies to improve the systematic use and scientific proof that informs decisions on equity and health. This is reflected in the Health Agenda for the Americas 2008-2017, (7) participation in discussions and consultations, and in the development of technical and Ministerial networks for this purpose.

8. PAHO/WHO has organized and participated in regional consultations to define the document on WHO's Roles and Responsibilities for Health Research and preparation of WHO's Research Strategy. PAHO/WHO and its Advisory Committee on Health Research is preparing a Research Policy with that will complement WHO's Research Strategy for consultation and present will present it for the consideration of its Governing Bodies in 2009.

9. Specific initiatives have been developed to boost public confidence in scientific research, increase access to published and unpublished research, facilitate the production and use of research material that informs health policies, strengthens national health research systems and research ethics, and make optimum use of scientific knowledge by addressing the unfinished agendas and making preparations to face new challenges.

10. Leaders in health and research, policy makers, and other interested parties participated in sub regional meetings to discuss strategies for strengthening national health research systems, human resources for health research, funding and other issues along with the use of existing alliances and available consultative and working bodies.(8)(9)

11. To respond to this challenge, develop capacities, expertise, collaboration and regional networks, PAHO/WHO is aligning its technical cooperation with PAHO/WHO Collaborating Centers, networks and strategic partners.

Preparation for the Bamako Ministerial Forum 2008

12. The Ministerial Forum for Health Research to be held in Mali in November 2008 will serve as follow up to the Mexico Ministerial Summit. Health authorities are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity to protect the achievements and emphasize the commitments made in response to the World Health Assembly Resolution 58.34 which is geared towards the strengthening national health research systems.

13. The Ministerial Forum is an opportunity to identify and address unfinished agendas, such as neglected diseases, the non-achieved Millennium Development Goals, deal with health inequities, improve health systems, and apply simple and effective strategies that would improve the quality of life of peoples and facilitate development.

14. The Ministerial Forum is also an opportunity to identify new challenges, such as preparing for environmental changes, emerging diseases, use of new technologies and their unexpected effects, as well as for the setting new standards, the appearance of ethical dilemmas, and the development of tools to monitor research and improve its governance and stewardship.

Next Steps

15. Significant progress has been made over the last four years.

16. To build on this achievements and make the best of the Bamako meeting, we propose the initiation of a regional dialogue and consultation to be held during this quarter (June-August). This will be followed by the preparation of a resolution and consultations with counterparts in the health, science and technology, and education sectors.

17. After consultations with various sectors, a resolution for the Bamako Ministerial Forum will be prepared and included on the agenda for consideration by the Governing Bodies at the 48th Directing Council, 2008.

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