



ACP-EU JOINT PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

WOMEN'S FORUM

ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE: How to achieve the three Health MDGs

Draft Conclusions of the Women's Forum, 18 June 2006

ACP/EU JPA Vienna, Austria

The participants of the Women's Forum, gathered together on 18 June 2006 in Vienna, Austria, during the 11th Session of the ACP/EU JPA:

- Acknowledge that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) dealing with Health issues - MDG 4, *To reduce Child Mortality*, MDG 5, *To improve Maternal Health* and MDG 6 *To combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Other Diseases* - are the least likely to be met by 2015;
- Acknowledge that the three Health MDGs are crucial to achieving the final goal of development aid: the reduction and ultimate elimination of poverty (MDG 1);
- Acknowledge that, in countries where health systems are not being strengthened, non-state actors, in particular NGOs and community-based organisations, are playing an essential role in reaching the poor and vulnerable populations – especially women and children – that are most excluded from basic healthcare;
- Welcome the Global Fund to fight HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, and strongly recommend that EU Member States increase their level of financial commitments in support of the GFATM;
- Note that women are more adversely affected by poverty-related diseases due to gender inequality, their low socio-economic status and gender-based violence (including Female Genital Mutilation, “FGM”); women are disproportionately represented among the world's poor and refugee populations, and as such need specific measures to protect their health needs;
- Call on the ACP Member States, the EU and the international donors to scale up universal access to prevention, treatment and care for poverty-related diseases, prioritise gender equality and women's social and economic empowerment, and prevent gender-based violence;

- Support the *Abuja Call of May 2006 for Accelerated Action towards universal access to HIV and Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria Services in Africa*¹;
- Call on the Governments of the ACP countries to take a leadership role at national, regional and continental levels to promote enabling policies and a legal and social environment to improve basic health systems and intensify the fight against all poverty-related diseases such as HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria;
- Call on ACP countries, the European Commission, the EU Member States and international donors to make global health and medicines a priority and take determined action to establish priorities in research and development that reflect the needs of patients, especially those in resource-poor settings, people living with HIV/AIDS and other vulnerable groups, and to harness collaborative research and development initiatives involving disease-endemic countries;
- Acknowledge that HIV and AIDS continue to be among the leading causes of morbidity and mortality and continue to cause considerable economic loss – exacting an increasing toll on society, young people, women and children in particular; stresses therefore the need to increase prevention by using and reinforcing the synergies between HIV/AIDS programmes and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) programmes;
- Stress the need to promote and support research and development of microbicides, vaccines, diagnostics and treatment for HIV and AIDS, TB and malaria, including traditional medicines;
- Call on the ACP countries and the EU to accelerate malaria control programmes with the objective of eliminating malaria using all effective strategies, such as indoor residual spraying, insecticide-treated bed nets, Artemisinin Combination Therapy (ACT) and Intermittent Presumptive Therapy (IPT);
- Call on ACP countries and the EU Member States to take into account the flexibilities contained in the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property rights (TRIPs) and recognized by the Doha Ministerial Declaration on the TRIPs Agreement and Public Health;
- Emphasise the need to strengthen political commitment to nutrition- and poverty-related diseases, particularly HIV and AIDS, as part of their health agenda;
- Call on the ACP countries to increase access to sanitation and clean water in order to improve human health and reduce infant and child mortality, by prioritising water and sanitation in national sustainable development strategies and poverty reduction strategies;
- Recognise that chronic health-worker shortages are seriously hampering the achievement of the Health MDGs; calls on the ACP countries, the EU and the international donors to increase financing to support incentive schemes, decent work opportunities and social protection for health workers and improve training and capacity building of the national health systems;

¹ Special Summit of the African Union on HIV and Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria, 2-4 May 2006.

- Call on the EU Member States and the European Commission to coordinate their policies in order not to fuel the continued brain drain of healthcare workers from the developing world;
- Stress the need to further develop and support partnerships – particularly public, private, civil society and regional partnerships and international partnerships involving donors – to promote universal access to basic healthcare, including SRM, and to prevention, treatment and care for all poverty-related diseases;
- Acknowledge that the Abuja Declaration of 2001 set a target for all African countries of 15% of public spending for health. However, analysis shows that many countries are still far short of this goal, as two thirds of countries are spending below 10%²;
- Call on the Governments of the ACP countries to include health in the Country Strategy Papers (CSPs), the Regional Strategy papers (RSPs) and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and to specifically identify the fight against HIV/AIDS and other poverty-related diseases as a priority in the EDF financing framework;
- Call on the EU Member States to ensure sufficient funding for the new Financial Instrument for Development Cooperation and their implementing Geographic and Thematic Programmes as well as the European Development Fund (EDF) to guarantee predictable and sustainable funding for health in the developing world;
- Call on the international donors, in particular the EU, to raise the level of spending on essential health measures, including on HIV/AIDS-related measures, to USD 30-40 per capita, as stated in the report of the WHO's Commission on Macroeconomics and Health (2001)³, as the level of spending on health in low-income countries is insufficient to address the health challenges they face;
- Call on the ACP countries to design policies to deal vigorously with corruption, which is undermining strategies for promoting access, prevention, treatment and care;
- Call on the Governments of the ACP countries to design appropriate policies and legal frameworks to challenge the traditional norms, values and practices that increase the risk of women and girls becoming infected;
- Stress the need for improved access to contraceptives and other reproductive health supplies in order to break the cycle of poverty and early death, especially maternal deaths;
- Call for universal access to sexual and reproductive health services, information and education to reduce child deaths and improve maternal health;

² DFID Health Resource Centre: *Health Financing in Africa: Universal Access to HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria Services by a United Africa by 2010*, April 2006

³ Microeconomics and Health: Investing in Health for Economic Development. Report of the Commission on Macroeconomics and Health, 2001.

- Stress that urgent action is needed to deal with Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and HIV/AIDS in countries in conflict and fragile states;
- Support the development of the anti-AIDS programme by the social partners concluded between the International Organisation of Employers (IOE) and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU);
- Ask the Bureau/Plenary of the JPA to consider holding, during its next session in Barbados in November 2006, a special workshop, in the form of a case-study, on healthcare systems, focusing on combating HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other poverty-related diseases, and on SRHR;
- Forward this document to the Co-presidents and request that they consider forwarding the conclusions of the Women's Forum in Vienna of 18 June 2006 to the ACP-EU Council and Commission, the Governments of the EU Member States and ACP countries, before the XVIth International AIDS Conference in Toronto in August 2006.