

OPENING ADDRESS

By

Com. Dr. Gizaw Tsehai
Central Committee Member of the Workers ' Party of Ethiopia
and Minister of Health

Mr. Chairman,
Participants,
Comrades.

It is a great pleasure for me to have the opportunity to address this august gathering of experts on the control of chronic communicable diseases and Primary Health Care with particular reference to leprosy and tuberculosis.

The gains achieved by the Ethiopian Revolution are many and are well-documented. It may suffice to say that the gains are increasing year after year although there is still much to be done. The formation of the Workers ' Party of Ethiopia and the 10- Year perspective Plan are among recent developments in the history of the Revolution which will strengthen our effort to achieve the objectives of health for the broad masses. From the outset of our popular revolution, the Revolutionary Government of Socialist Ethiopia declared its commitment to sparing no effort in providing health for the broad masses as clearly stated in the national democratic revolution programme. To that end, and in accordance with the social goal of "Health for All by the Year 2000", the Ministry of Health established a health policy based on Primary Health Care which is rural-oriented. The broad masses were organized so that today they are actively participating in all socio-economic activities to facilitate the achievement of the nation's health aims and objectives.

Communicable diseases, nutritional problems and diseases arising from lack of proper environmental and sanitary practices are still the major health problems of the country. Leprosy and tuberculosis fall within the major group of chronic communicable diseases that need serious attention in Ethiopia. At present the estimated number of leprosy cases is 120,000 having a prevalence rate of 41/1000 population. The introduction of Multiple Drug Therapy in the treatment of leprosy cases is significantly reducing the prevalence and incidence rates of leprosy which is a good move towards the control of the disease. Regarding tuberculosis, its prevalence rate is estimated to be about 20/1000 population. The policy of the Ministry of Health with regard to the control of these chronic communicable diseases is to gradually integrate their activities with the general health services. In order to realize this policy, the Ministry of Health has taken some initial steps such as training of health personnel on the control of leprosy and tuberculosis so as to provide integrated health services to the people.

However, one realizes that existing health units do not all participate fully in the control programmes of tuberculosis and leprosy. Therefore, intensive training and retraining of health workers at all levels and involvement of all health units for the control of the

diseases must be designed and undertaken. These efforts must be strengthened by a good referral system and regular supervision. Although the institutional infrastructure of the TB programme is not yet well-developed, its activities need to be added to the leprosy control programme in order to have the same footing prior to the integration of both programmes into the general health services.

Other areas of importance that need to be seriously considered are continuous provision of basic drugs and laboratory facilities.

Finally, the enthusiasm and conviction by all health workers to carry out the control activities of leprosy and tuberculosis is very essential to facilitate intewation. Years have passed Since Ethiopia has committed herself to "Health for All by the Year 2000" through the Primary Health, Care approach. This approach entails a strong commitment to the principles and goals of Primary, Health Care and the full participation of health workers at all levels as well as other civil servants of related ministries who are part of the multi-sectoral nature of this programme. The community's full participation from the planning phase to the operational level plays a decisive role in the success of the programme and in the achievement of the goals of Primary Health Care.

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to the NHDN Nucleus for organizing such a symposium to deliberate on such important issues as integration of leprosy, TB and Primary I Health Care. I wish you success in your deliberations and declare this Symposium open.

Thank you.